

# THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1899.

---

## THE TOWER GARDENS.\*

A STORY RE-TOLD.

---

### CHAPTER I.

JESSIE.

IT was the night of the seventh of April. Jessie Bayliss had drawn up a little round table so near to the fire that it was a marvel its one mahogany leg did not ignite; it was already rough with minute blisters, the result of many scorplings.

On that little round table was an elderly black straw hat, some weather-worn black velvet and sundry bows of crape, soft with age.

The crape, as a trimming, had had its day, and a long one too. Its owner had just been using it to rub up the velvet with which it had shared eighteen months of very hard wear, in the rains and mists of the North Countrie.

Out of these unpromising materials Jessie had been trying for some time to make a new and beautiful covering for one of the prettiest heads to be found on the Scotch side of the Western Borders—her own.

She had made several attempts. She possessed, or thought she possessed, a masterful way with such things; but to-night that gift failed her. Alison, her cousin, having succumbed to a bad cold, was in bed and asleep; Jessie had no one else to encourage her, no one to admire her cunning devices, to sympathise with her failures, to urge her to try again; no one to talk to, to laugh at; so she pulled her work to pieces, stuck her long needle into the solitary reel of black cotton, and turned shivering to the fire.

\* The great attention that has lately been given to the neighbourhood of the Tower, the opening, after long years, of the Tower Gardens to the public, the romantic and historical atmosphere ever surrounding the Tower itself—all these considerations give an intrinsic value to this tale at the present moment, and will make it especially interesting to the reader, quite apart from the life, movement, and vivacity which, from the first page to the last, characterise the story of THE TOWER GARDENS.

It was a bitter night.

The toes of Jessie's slippers were scorching, but to get warm all over was impossible; and Jessie's fire was not built up with customary Birrendale generosity.

It was April by the calendar; in London, in the Towers Gardens, the lilacs were in bud; in Birrendale it was winter then, as it had been for nearly six long months.

I almost wish Jessie had not turned away from the lamp-light when she did, because you might have seen her features a little better then; and they were distinctly worth looking at.

But perhaps it was as well; poor child, she was not at her brightest that night! Who could be while the wind was howling round the house like a pack of famishing wolves, with a fierce dismal sound that brought to mind only too vividly that other more terrible wolf that Jessie knew but too surely was already sniffing about the door of her own home?

Jessie shuddered and sighed.

"Once before, when I was a little girl, I had the same dreadful, eerie feeling that haunts me now so often, whenever I hear that noise," she said to herself. "Aye! but it's dreary, dreary, dreary! Oh, if that river would only leave off rushing and tearing on these rough nights! If that wind would only leave off howling! I never can help thinking of my father being drowned! It brings back all that awful time so horribly! What is going to be the end of this?—it can't go on! We shall all be dead soon, if it lasts much longer." And she looked into the fire very sadly.

It was Jessie's part to supply brightness in that desolate household, and for the most part she supplied it liberally. As a rule her brightness was as natural and spontaneous as a sunbeam's, but to-night it had died down; she had not enough for herself, and none for other people.

"Auntie's all alone, I must go to her, I suppose," she thought; but to go to her seemed a very disagreeable duty.

"She doesn't need me," she said. "She won't speak a word to me. She will only make me more eerie. Well, I must go! Duty's duty! I hope Alison's cold will be better to-morrow. I really must have someone to talk to! Ah!" and instead of rising to go to her aunt, she bent nearer the fire—"Ah! Mac Carruthers! I suppose you're enjoying yourself finely in the sunny south!" she went on, addressing a young man who was often in her thoughts, and just then in her mind's eye. "How I should like to be in a warm place, where the sun shines!—or—I don't think I could be very miserable anywhere with Mac Carruthers." This last sentence, however, came from a different part of her consciousness than any of her previous thoughts, and it made her smile, which she did freely upon the least provocation. And it also made her linger over the fire.

She certainly had the most exquisite mouth! She always had had;

even as a child everyone had wanted to kiss it. The mouth itself was sweetly, beautifully drawn, delicately modelled, sensitive to the slightest emotion; now bending with a smile into free and winning curves, now straightening into a wistful pathos, but always beautiful and very tempting.

A thought made Jessie blush deeply; she raised a hand to her cheek and lightly touched that blush with her finger tips, as if to brush it away. Then she sighed; but it was quite a different sigh from any that had within the last hour gone before it.

"And to think how Mac's enjoying himself!" she said. "I'm certain he's enjoying himself, and I'm—sh-o-o—sh-o-o—shivering!"

She couldn't quite make out whether she saw in the fire a grand foreign *table-d'hôte*, such as she had read about, or an equally splendid foreign ball-room.

"But whichever it is," she went on after a while, "I can be certain as to what he's doing: flirting, of course."

A dozen different thoughts and feelings went with the words.

"And I'd be flirting, too, if I had the chance, I suppose," she added presently. "That is, I don't 'suppose'—I *know*. After all, what does it mean? Only that one likes to amuse and be amused. Well, then comes the question, whether—whether?"—the pause and thoughts not to be put into words. "Falling in love must be—is—why something very different, something very awful. I ought to know what it is. Poor, poor, sweet, dear little mother! I ought to know!" she said solemnly, and with a shudder that was not all due to the bitter cold. "Ah me! Ah me! why do I keep thinking of her—of her and of my father so much to-night? It is that dreadful rushing, roaring of the Birren! Oh! if it would only cease. I must go and look after auntie. But, I wonder, now, I can't help wondering, what Mac's doing. Yes, I think, do you know, I rather like poor old Mac! And he? Oh! I'm only one among half-a-hundred by this time! 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder'—of somebody else. Very true, but supposing there isn't somebody else to grow fond of, or only the Boy Baird, what then? No, I can't stand that howling wind any longer. It wails so for the poor drowning people. Oh!" with a sudden cry of grief, "it's the seventh of April, the day my father was drowned! I must go!—I must go!"

She sprang up, hurriedly put out the candle, and noiselessly opening the bedroom door, went into the passage that ran through the house. It was dimly lighted by one small benzoline lamp. She flew along the corridor, frightened by all sorts of vague terrors. The Dale's people said the glen below that house was haunted. Her own shadow, large and ghostlike, caught her up, passed her, went before her on the wall. She ran on, scarcely daring to breathe.

In the hall, at the end of the corridor, where burned another small cheap lamp, might partially be seen a squatting Indian idol, sundry

swords and other war-like trophies, and a couple of hats that had once belonged to Jessie's uncle, the late Captain James Bayliss, her father's brother.

She rushed across the hall and into the dining-room, which, although well furnished in modern light oak, looked to her unspeakably desolate.

Her aunt, Mrs. Bayliss, a pale-haired woman with a wind-spoiled complexion, dressed in the grimmest widow's weeds, was sitting near the fire, looking over papers. She always made the place seem desolate; but she was, at any rate, a living person; that was something to Jessie. Any living person was better than those ghostly shadows.

"How is Alison?" Mrs. Bayliss asked, without looking up; there was that on her heart that made it impossible for her to face her niece.

"Asleep," returned Jessie, seating herself on the little stone wall that bounded the tiled hearth, and shivering with cold and a nameless dread.

"Then no doubt she'll be better to-morrow," said Mrs. Bayliss, turning the page of a letter.

"I'm sure I hope so," said Jessie. "I'm wretched without her."

Mrs. Bayliss, Alison's mother, made no further remark, but went on with her papers for some time.

"I expect the last little calf will be dead before the morning," she said presently, in a tone of calm despair.

Jessie said nothing, but she felt a strange—no, not at all strange, only too common—soreness about her heart.

"Everything dies here. We shall be dead soon," she said, half under her voice. Mrs. Bayliss heard the remark, but made no reply; she knew it was only too probable.

Out of doors the wind howled like a whole starving menagerie; within Jessie and her aunt sat in most oppressive silence for some time.

"If you wrote to Uncle John—to your brother, Mr. John Harbuckle—don't you think he would help us, auntie? I'm quite sure he would—and be glad of the chance," Jessie ventured at last to say. She had been wanting to say this for several days past.

Mrs. Bayliss rose—went to the mantel-shelf and gazed steadily at a large coloured photograph of the late Captain in his uniform.

Then she turned and looked down at her niece on the stone coping of the hearth.

"Jessie," she said, with bitter emphasis, "my brother John, like the rest of the kind people, will be very glad to help us—in *his own way*. They'd see us starve sooner than help us in our way."

"Because they know it would be no good, auntie," said Jessie, dropping her voice. "It would only be throwing more money into the sea."

"When you are a widow, my dear, it will be time for you to advise



widows ; not before," continued Mrs. Bayliss emphatically, her voice hard with intense emotion. "Your mother, Jessie, would not have blamed me—she was a widow, and *she knew*."

Jessie was effectually quelled.

She sat in silence until the clock struck ten, and then vanished to her own room, sad, lonely, and shivering.

By a rather strange coincidence, as events showed, on that night Jessie dreamed, when warmed with sleep, that she was walking along some well-remembered shore, by a placid sea, with her mother, who had now been dead more than seven years. She had dreamed of her many and many a time before, but always had awakened in distress ; for, hitherto, that mother's face had come to her full of the same terrible look of bewildered anguish it had worn during the awful months that had elapsed between the day on which Jessie had last seen her father and her mother's own death.

That night, in her dream, Jessie and her mother both walked quietly hand in hand, as they had done on summer holidays long ago, and Jessie, without any fear, looked up into her mother's face.

The mother smiled gently and was gone.

Jessie awoke ; for a moment, calm and happy as she used to be when a child at home, before the dreadful days came.

"Thank God I have seen you happy once more, dear !" passed through her heart and brain. "Thank God I have seen your smile again !"

But she opened her eyes. The placid summer waves were gone ; the room was full of cold moonlight ; the ravening wind was still unsatisfied ; the angry stream was still tearing wildly down to the Solway.

## CHAPTER II.

### KNOWE FARM.

AMONG the rounded hill-tops that gently rise above the Scotch bank of the Solway is an eminence of so peculiar a form that it has become a landmark for the whole country-side it dominates.

With massive squareness and broad flat summit it stands out, bold and abrupt, above the soft and graceful curves of a low range ; like a gigantic rampart or colossal earthwork made by man rather than by nature. I will call it Mount Agricola ; for the Romans, who always knew a good site, fortified this great mound ; and even now, in a solemn grey twilight, when the stern green hill is dark as the stem of a spruce fir, it requires but a slight effort of the imagination to see a ghostly sentry still on duty among the mists that hang around its head.

That broad flat head is the highest ground for many a mile around. From it, on a clear summer day, when the wild thyme is

blooming and the sheep are browsing on the hillside, one may see more counties, English and Scotch, than I care to mention. It looks over a lovely borderland, all fertile dales and green or wooded hills, following each other in a seemingly endless succession in great wave-like lines; as if a tumbling sea, without losing its form, had been changed into solid earth.

Down from those hills wander numberless little burns, that fall into larger streams as those streams hasten to join a swift river rushing to meet the Solway, before that Solway's tide has all run out to the great ocean, that is shining in the far distance like the dove in the Psalms, covered with silver wings and her feathers like gold.

One of the streams that run down to the Solway is the Birren Water, and it was in Birrendale that Mrs. Bayliss and the girls lived.

This is how they came to be there.

About four years and a half before the date of that April evening when Jessie talked to herself over the fire, two men were walking by the side of a salmon pool in the Birren. It was an exceptionally beautiful autumn afternoon, there was a sound of rushing water in the distance, but the deep pool was very still; the heavily wooded banks were only yet touched here and there with gold and brown. On one side of the water, long branches dipped into the stream; on the other, tall firs, straight as cathedral columns, dwarfed the men who were walking between the great trees, and a bank, that would have been but one tangle of fern, bramble and meadow-sweet, had not the old red sandstone cropping up here and there, supplied the needful drawing that made confusion picturesqueness.

All was very still and solemn; the bright sunlight that was fast ripening the oats on the uplands beyond the woods, could hardly penetrate through the great boughs of silver fir overhead.

The two men went on for some little distance in silence, at length one spoke.

"A fine fish, but he just broke me!" he said dolefully. "I'll not sleep to-night for thinking of him!"

The younger man, Captain James Bayliss, had already heard this lament a dozen times or more. He was tired of it.

"Lucky beggar, you, to have no more serious trouble to keep you awake!" he replied, in a tone conveying the impression that his thoughts and words were far apart.

"Well, your sleep ought to be sweet enough after that unexpected windfall!" retorted the other, as if slightly wounded by his companion's unsympathetic tone.

"That's just it!" said Bayliss, "it is that windfall that won't let me rest."

"Aye," threw in Major Johnstone. (There are a great many Johnstones about the Western Border; they and the Maxwells had a civil war of their own, of very respectable dimensions, in the days of

Queen Elizabeth—of James the Sixth, I should say; there is no Queen Elizabeth in Scotland.)

"The question constantly agitating me now, is, how to invest that money to the very best advantage," continued Captain Bayliss, with a curious mixture of anxiety and self-importance in his tone.

Here they turned from the bank of the stream and took a rough brae-side path, beyond which a burn merrily trickled down over masses of red rocks to the river the two men had just left.

"Ah, happy thought! I know where we can get some tea!" exclaimed Major Johnstone, as Captain Bayliss paused, as if waiting for his friend's advice; "this is Mackenzie's place."

"You don't say we are on private grounds?" said Bayliss, who was then paying his first visit to Birrendale. "I thought we were at least a hundred and fifty miles from tea and civilisation."

They turned a corner of the woodland path, and came suddenly upon a small plateau above the river and the banks.

Here, in the full sunshine, was a carefully kept lawn, where the children, in Japanese hats with great red bows, were playing croquet. Beyond the lawn was a broad drive and a red sandstone house, all ground floor.

"What a beautiful bungalow! the very place I've been dreaming of!" exclaimed Bayliss, very much awake all at once.

Two of the children, a boy and a girl, catching sight of the Major's well-known figure, ran up to him.

"Where's the fish? We saw you playing him! We saw you, but you didn't see us; you were too busy to look up. Has Muir taken him home?" asked the girl.

"He just broke me and got away," said the Major, shaking his head ruefully; "and we've nothing but a dozen herling and five wee trout, and never a fish at all."

"Aren't trout fish?" asked the boy, a little southern visitor.

The girl laughed and the Major laughed.

"A salmon's a fish, here! Why, don't you know that? You don't know anything," said the girl.

"Will your mother have some tea for us?" asked Major Johnstone.

"Yes, I know she will. But it's our turn to play now, so we must go," and off ran the children.

The men went to the drawing-room window; it was open, several ladies were within—tea was going on.

The men refused the invitation to enter; they stood by the window lamenting their ill luck. The ladies gave them tea in cups on which were painted sprays of purple heather. Captain Bayliss, who was English, noticed among the sugar at the bottom of his cup a Scotch thistle, with which national emblem the cosy over his hostess's tea-pot was also adorned.

While Major Johnstone was finishing his little chat with the ladies

Captain Bayliss turned his back to the window for a minute or two, and looked at the view of stream and wood, visible through a carefully cut opening among the trees. The mingling of clear, crisp air and warm autumn sunshine, through which he saw it all, made it seem to him quite perfect; for "Autumn," as the poet says, "is Scotch."

"What a sweet spot. What an exquisite picture of refined domesticity!" James Bayliss exclaimed, as he and the Major moved off between great banks of rhododendron towards a country road. Alas, alas, for the poor Captain! his doom was sealed.

"Aye," assented the Major. "It's just perfect!"

"The fact is," said Bayliss uneasily, as if about to make an admission that was open to criticism, "I'm looking out for a place myself."

"Mackenzie will be leaving soon. His uncle's dead, and he succeeds to the Nithsdale property," said Johnstone, with a backward turn of his head to indicate emphatically the owner of the grounds they were going through.

"Is he? Then I'll take it," exclaimed Bayliss, "if it's anywhere within my range."

"Well, I'll be glad of you for a neighbour. You'll find plenty of old Indians round about here," said Johnstone.

"The fact is," and Bayliss paused, "I'm going in for farming."

The Major stopped short, and stared aghast.

"The man's daft!" he cried.

"I never was saner in my life," returned Bayliss, somewhat nettled.

"Never saner! Then it's a wonder they've let you be at large so long," retorted Johnstone.

"What do you mean, Johnstone?" demanded Bayliss, with rising temper.

"Mean? I mean that if you need to get rid of your money, just pitch it into yon salmon pool, but don't——"

"But, my dear fellow, I've gone into the thing thoroughly; I've been studying it for some time now. I've worked it all out to a nicety. It must pay if it's properly managed; it can't fail! Eggs, three farthings a dozen; butter, sixpence a pound; fowls, twopence——"

"Ho! ho! That's your line, is it? Then I know what you've been reading. I'd lay an even bet your portmanteau's crammed full of pamphlets. Put that trash into the fire!"

"Trash! But I mean to carry it out," cried Bayliss, with considerable temper.

"Then you're a gone coon, as sure as ever that fish broke me to-day! By the way, when we had that long palaver at the club, last spring, I thought you told me you were going in for art; for art—and, if my memory serves me, for literature?"

"Well," said Bayliss, with hesitation; "yes"—they were upon the high road by this time—"yes, and I'm going in for art still. I

had some first-rate lessons last winter in Paris ; and I've just begun a portrait of my wife that everyone says is quite a striking likeness ; really, I don't see that art need interfere with farming."

"And the literature?"

"I don't mind admitting I dropped some money there," said Bayliss, with evident reluctance.

"You don't mean to say you bought a newspaper?" exclaimed the Major.

"Why, no : it wasn't quite so bad as that ; I was not quite so far left to myself. I—hem!—I worked up some of my own Indian experiences into a novel, and——"

"Hasn't the same thing been done before?" asked Major Johnstone, without waiting for the close of the sentence. "Didn't Grey, and long Jim Smith, and MacArthur, and several others, attempt something of the sort?"

"Yes, but not just in my way, I fancy. Seriously, though, I can't help believing that my book would have been a great success, only, you see, so few publishers know India as we know it."

"True! but perhaps they know the British public rather better. So you published on your own account?"

"I paid for the publishing, certainly; and then the beggar bolted, by Jove! and I lost my money, book and all. I've cut literature."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Yes, I've cut literature altogether; although I've a Manual of Fortification seething in my brain that's really too good to be lost to the Service. But there, I won't think of it; I'll strangle it! My mind now is wholly given to farming. My wife has long fancied she could manage a farm; now I've this little bit of money to lay out, I should be a brute if I didn't get her one."

"Still a model husband?"

"My wife says so."

"Well, she ought to know! Now here's a Birrendale farm. How do you think Mrs. Bayliss would like to live in that white-washed house with the drab window frames?"

"Of course I don't mean that sort of thing. We should live, say, at the place we have just left."

"Then you think Mrs. Bayliss wouldn't care to come out in that yard in the depth of winter and slice turnips for a couple of dozen cows? The people here all work early and late, live hard, and only just make both ends meet."

"Ah, but I am going to bring modern science to bear upon it," said Captain James Bayliss, knitting his brows with great energy.

"You won't beat the science of a Birrendale farmer, depend upon that; why, yon barley-field was a moss a dozen years ago! But, joking apart, Bayliss, think of your wife and those two very nice girls, and don't, there's a good fellow, don't turn farmer! Unless, indeed,

you're positively *anxious* to die penniless ; in which case the farm will enable you to do so very comfortably."

As well might Major Johnstone have attempted to reason a young man out of a wished-for marriage as Captain Bayliss out of a new hobby.

Before many months had passed, James Bayliss, for the time being the happiest man in the world, was the owner of Cauldknowe, that charming place where they had had those insidious cups of tea, and also of the Knowe farm adjoining.

The Major shook his head when his friend told him of his purchase.

"Well, Bayliss, if you *will* cut your own throat you *must*," he said ; "but I am sorry mine should have been the hand that passed you the razor."

James Bayliss and Mary his wife both agreed that if a thing was worth doing at all, it was worth doing well. Cauldknowe was to be the first really settled home they had had in all their married life, for hitherto they had been moving about at duty's call ; but now the Captain had retired from the Service and they were free to make a home for themselves. Their goods and chattels were but few, which was, they thought, fortunate, as it gave them an excellent opportunity of putting entirely new furniture into Cauldknowe ; and, as everyone knows, furniture is now very much better than it was at the time James and Mary Bayliss were married ; besides which, the Captain rather prided himself on his artistic culture, and was glad of the opportunity of displaying the progress he had recently made in decorative art.

So they spent a good deal of money upon Cauldknowe.

Then the Knowe farm had been, the Captain thought, much neglected. It required fresh draining, new stading, fresh and expensive machinery, before modern science could be effectually brought to bear upon it.

So they spent a great deal of money upon the Knowe farm.

Spending money was still a new luxury to them : they enjoyed it very much ; more than they had ever enjoyed anything before, since their honeymoon.

There was a brief time in the lives of James and Mary Bayliss, and the girls, Alison, their daughter, and Jessie, their niece, during which they lived in an earthly paradise ; there was one brief Scottish summer, one glorious Scottish autumn, when all was radiant with happiness and hope ; a few months that in retrospect seemed as absolutely perfect as a sunny day in Birrendale.

And then came steady failure.

The winter snowed them up for many a week together ; the spring was black and desolate ; summer, long waited for, came not ; in autumn there was rain, and rain, and rain. The fields of ripe oats, the delicious fragrance of which had helped to lure the Captain to his ruin, gave place to acres of soddened stalks beaten down and discoloured by the tempest. It was October before the little that

remained of the drowned hay could be got in ; but that fatal year was only the beginning of sorrows. Let us draw a veil over the miserable details.

Far better would it have been if James and Mary Bayliss had thrown the legacy into the salmon pool, by whose still depths it had been so blissful to sit together on summer evenings, while the girls made posies of blue-bell and meadow-sweet, than to have sunk, not only their money, but themselves, in that all-devouring farm, that "daughter of the horse-leech," that cried for ever, "Give ! give !" but gave them nothing in return.

It was a heart-rending failure. Of course, everyone except themselves knew it must prove so ; but the more they lost on the farm the more desperately they clung to it.

The poor Captain, although he had no knowledge of farming, had plenty of theories, which, in spite of the ruin they brought on him, he cherished with the affection of a parent for his sickly offspring. He had always something fresh to try, and, at last, on one of his men objecting to use a new reaping machine, different from any he had ever met with, Captain Bayliss took the machine in hand himself, and was so badly injured that after many weary weeks of suffering and prostration, he was at last convinced that he had been wrong all the way through.

But it was too late then, for he was on the point of leaving, not only his farm, but this world altogether, before he fully realised how complete had been his failure.

He turned his face away from his wife, who was sitting by his bed-side, trying hard to keep back her tears, and he moaned :

"A failure, Mary, a dead failure ; but not such a failure as I am myself. All the way through I've been a failure !"

Mary could control herself no longer.

"No, no ! dearest," she sobbed passionately. "In your love to me there's been no failure, never, never, dear ! In your care for the girls there's been no failure, never, never once ! And—and—oh, James !—James !—we've been so happy—and I've been so proud of you—so proud ! Ah, you'll never know how proud—I've been—and—and—I always shall be !"

He feebly turned his head, stretched out his left hand to her, for his right one was so mangled he could not lift it.

"Is it so, love ?" he asked, with a faint smile ; and again Mary sobbed out her pride in him.

So, in spite of all, that wail, "So proud of you, so proud !" were the last earthly sounds that bore any distinct meaning to the failing senses of poor James Bayliss.

"John," said the widow to her brother, an old bachelor who lived in Trinity Square, Tower Hill, when he urged her to return to town with him after the funeral, "John, the carrying out of my lost darling's plans is the sacred duty to which I devote my life !"



"Mary, it's sheer ruin," said John Harbuckle gravely, firmly, but kindly.

"I cannot be more ruined than I am. I have lost all in losing him," returned Mary, in a tone of quiet, resolute desperation. "I devote my life to the furtherance of his wishes."

"But you admit that at last he saw his mistake," John said.

"I admit nothing that would in any way reflect upon the clearness of his judgment. If the world thinks he was mistaken, it must be my life's work to show the world he was *not*," retorted the widow.

The heroism of which speech so touched the heart of the bachelor brother that he actually supplied her with more money to throw after what had already been lost, and returned to town trusting, he said, to time and what that would do for her.

Away from the sight of her grief, John Harbuckle was able to look at the matter from a business point of view; therefore during the next eighteen months he exchanged very few letters with his sister in Birrendale.

Mary understood what that meant; she ceased writing to him at all.

Alison and Jessie had a dreadful time of it with Mrs. Bayliss.

"I wonder sometimes," said Jessie, often and often, "whether auntie means to throw us to the wolves, too! Whenever the wind howls, which is nearly always, I can hear them. I don't want to be thrown to them; do you, Alie?"

"I won't be!" was invariably Alison's resolute answer.

"You won't be! Oh, but auntie always has her way."

"That will have to come to an end some day; but I can't bear the idea of having to fight her. Perhaps I shouldn't, only, you know, there's you, Jessie. We must get mother to do what Uncle John wishes."

Then the girls determined to seize an opportunity of talking to Mrs. Bayliss on the subject, but Alison succumbing to a terrible cold, Jessie made the attempt alone, and was consequently signally defeated.

"Wait till you are widows yourselves before you take upon you to advise a widow!"

That was all the girls would both together have been able to extort from Mrs. Bayliss.

"And as neither of us is even engaged yet, there is every probability that we shall be starved to death long before we have time to get married," said Jessie, when she told Alison of Mrs. Bayliss's remark.

It was on the night of the seventh of April Mrs. Bayliss made this remark. When Jessie returned to her room she had found Alison awake, and had told her of it before she went to sleep and dreamt that blessed dream, in which once more she saw her own mother's

smile. But even the memory of that brief glimpse of warmth and happiness could not prevent Jessie from shuddering in the bitter cold of the Northern winter.

## CHAPTER III.

## ALONE.

It was the evening of the seventh of April, the evening on which Jessie Bayliss had sat over the fire in her bedroom at Cauldknowe, scorching the toes of her slippers and talking to herself about many things, most of them sad.

Against this date in the mental note-book John Harbuckle carried about with him, he wrote some time afterwards :

"The Day of the Upheaval."

The Day of the Upheaval had already been an eventful one for John Harbuckle, the brother of Mary, widow of the late Captain James Bayliss.

Early in the morning he had, by the merest chance, been present at the very moment when the workmen who were digging for the foundation of a large public building to be erected near his own house had struck upon what he was certain must prove to be part of a bastion of old London Wall.

Such a thing does not happen every day.

"Our friend Woolcomb," John Harbuckle afterwards said, in describing the scene to a common acquaintance, "our friend Woolcomb was on the spot five minutes later ; but, unfortunately, as I think, he was unable to take my point of view. I am afraid I somewhat wounded his feelings by the very decided tone in which I expressed my opinions. Indeed, towards evening, the conviction that I had hurt him became so strong that I gave up my dinner with the Trinity Brethren and devoted a couple of hours to writing him a few lines. I felt I owed him an apology ; and I fancy, too, that, on mature consideration, I was enabled to put my case in a more convincing manner than had been possible during the heat of argument. Woolcomb received my apology in the kindest manner, although I failed to win him to my views. That, however, is of comparatively little moment ; our friendship remains not only unimpaired, but is stronger than ever, I am thankful to say. At my age we cannot afford to lose a friend ; it is so difficult to find a new one."

John Harbuckle, on the evening of that eventful day, was sitting at a large table which was covered with books, absolutely engrossed in writing what he was pleased to call, without any sense of the humour of the thing, "a few lines."

An Argand burner, with a shade that once had been red but had now faded down to a tone most lovely to an artistic eye, threw a disc

of brightness upon its owner's paper and helped the fire to give to the room a dim but pleasant light.

The room was large and very full, being much crowded by old family furniture as well as by the innumerable articles John Harbuckle was continually bringing home and putting down anywhere.

It was an apartment difficult to classify. Clearly it was no drawing-room, for it contained a large dining-table and dinner-waggon, both, however, now loaded with a heavy meal composed entirely of books and papers, and preventing the use of either the terms drawing-room or study, although there were books enough in it to form a considerable library. It was, in fact, the den of the old bachelor of fifty-three, who was then writing those "few lines" to his brother antiquary.

John Harbuckle's den! What have I said? Why, every individual hair of its owner's scanty locks would have risen with horror, could he have heard the words! What, call the dear room where his grandparents and parents, his brothers and sisters and his own youthful self had lived, and in which some—including his own youthful self—had died—a den? Profanity!

Ah, the young birds had flown away, the old ones had been buried, but to its solitary occupant that room was a nest still; his home now as it had always been.

Built somewhere about the time of our illustrious first George one might say it was. There were three long, narrow windows flush with the outside of the wall, and each window had a deep settle and panels carved with wreathen work, being, it was said, by Grinling Gibbons.

On each side of a mantelpiece of the same period were two large armchairs, showing unmistakable signs of long and hard wear. They were tenantless now, standing empty, facing each other, where for many a year John Harbuckle's parents had used them. The last occupier, the mother of the elderly man at the table, had died in one of them about two years ago. Her son had never yet allowed that sacred chair to be used; he never used it himself.

She was eighty-four when she died. Her son had been a tender nurse to her for many years.

The uncertain light from the fire and the shaded lamp, half revealed a good many old portraits on the walls, notably John Harbuckle's paternal grandmother, a lady of majestic presence and powerful features, delicately arrayed as a shepherdess; and her sister-in-law with a wreath of ripe wheat and an airy arrangement of spotted gauze, as the goddess Ceres; it having been the fashion in the remote times in which they were painted always to represent a person as somebody else, by way of enabling friends the more easily to recognise the likeness.

A pair of card tables, once the property of the shepherdess, occupied the recesses behind the armchairs; the shepherdess smirked

forcibly over one, while her husband, as Lord Mayor, with his massive official gold chain, maintained a dignified composure above the mantelpiece; on which a clock, in a mahogany case with a roof in the shape of a pagoda, ticked as if in a desperate hurry to get to the end of all time.

But had John Harbuckle, a man of fifty-three, no companions except the portraits of ancestors more or less remote, and the photographs of Mary Bayliss and the girls which stood on the mantelpiece? Surely children and grandchildren should have been his surroundings; and, indeed, might have been, but for a circumstance that took place about twenty-four or twenty-five years before that evening.

That circumstance having occurred, John Harbuckle was now a bachelor; with a memory—certainly; with an ideal attachment, certainly also;—but the memory (well, never mind that just now)—the ideal attachment, which had grown to be his master passion, was for the great city of which he so often fondly spoke (quoting Edmund Spenser, who was born not many yards from John Harbuckle's own birthplace)—

“Merry London, my most kindly nurse,  
That to me gave this life's first native source.”

John Harbuckle, as I have already said, was writing; and when he wrote to an antiquary he liked to write on foolscap, at a large table; he liked space and many books. He put his pen behind his ear every now and then, and going to the bookshelves, got down a thick volume or two or half-a-dozen smaller ones, pausing midway between the case and the table to read or search, but never returning any one of them to its place.

So, during the time he had been engaged upon those “few lines,” he had collected John Stowe, and Strype upon Stowe, Howell, Pennant, Wilkinson, and a host of other authorities, besides maps, prints, manuscripts, notebooks without end, and an infinite number of volumes strongly bound in calf, bearing the City shield and dagger, supported by its familiar arrow-tailed griffins, and the legend, “*Domine dirige nos*,” all done in gold.

For these books it was necessary to use the long dining-table, at which his parents, himself and his brothers and sisters had dined for many a year, in the times gone by for ever. He dined there alone now (he and Mary Bayliss being the only survivors), when he would allow sufficient space to be cleared for his meals.

After he had written for two or three hours and had made many voluminous abstracts, he ceased, drew the notebooks towards him, and after a long and, to judge by his countenance, diligent search, found the required passage, wrote it down, with a smile of genuine satisfaction playing about his face (he had a grave, but kindly and somewhat humorous smile), folded the many pages

containing his "few lines," addressed them to his friend, and put them into his pocket.

"I'll just step out and post this," he said, rising slowly; "I should like Woolcomb to get it as soon as possible. The last passage ought to settle him if anything will. But, like the rest of us, he loves his own opinions."

Leaving his books still heaped in confusion upon the table, John Harbuckle opened the door of his room. On the dark marble slab outside the door he found several letters waiting for him; for when it was known that he was writing, no one dared to intrude, except upon the most urgent business.

He took up the letters; those addressed, "Messrs. Harbuckle and Co., Trinity Square, E.C.," he laid aside at once, for he never opened business letters after five o'clock; but with those to "John Harbuckle, Esq." he returned to his chair by the Argand burner.

"Birrendale! Birrendale! But this isn't Mary's hand! I hope—I hope—I trust—nothing's wrong!" he exclaimed, with much agitation; and hurriedly adjusting his glasses and muttering, "Birrendale! not from Mary!" he opened the letter with the familiar post-mark and the unfamiliar hand.

It ran as follows:

"The Manse, Kirkhope,  
"Birrendale, N.B.

"JOHN HARBUCKLE, Esq.

"My dear Sir,—I have often recalled with pleasure the brief but interesting conversation I had with you on the melancholy occasion of the funeral of your late brother-in-law, Captain James Bayliss.

"The insight into your character I then obtained induces me to believe that you will not take this letter in any unfriendly spirit, nor feel that I am unwarrantably intruding upon your private affairs, when I venture to hint to you that, in my opinion, it would be better for your sister, Mrs. Bayliss, if she were nearer some kind and judicious relative, such as yourself, who would and could take the oversight of her affairs.

"I am aware of the very substantial aid you have already afforded her; aid that should have amply sufficed for her requirements; I fear, however, that in spite of your kindness she will soon find herself most awkwardly placed if someone who has the right to interfere does not do so promptly.

"I do not think that merely pecuniary assistance would be of any real use to her; indeed, my own feeling is that the reverse would be the case. I have endeavoured to reason with her, but in vain, as of course I can in no way control her actions.

"I hear she has borrowed money from a man at Glasgow, in whose hands I should be very sorry to see any relative of my own. This, I feel, is a serious matter, requiring immediate attention.

"I am sure you are not aware of her position; and as I have long

esteemed her as a valued parishioner, I now venture to inform you of it.

"You will be gratified to know that your niece, Alison, is developing something of the same love of antiquarian lore that you possess so strongly yourself.

"She is an interesting girl. The other day she showed me, with many blushes, a short paper she had written on 'Our Border Towers,' for which I have managed to secure a place in 'The Scottish Borderer,' one of our local papers. As soon as it appears I will send you a copy.

"Your sister's niece, Jessie, is another very interesting girl, although in quite another way. It might perhaps be better for her, I venture to think, as well as for her aunt's affairs, if she could be subjected to a somewhat stricter supervision than she is under at present.

"I must beg you to believe, that in thus appearing to trench upon your domestic affairs, I am actuated solely by the desire to serve your sister, and to prevent annoyance to yourself.

"I remain, my dear Sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"ANDREW BAIRD."

Five minutes earlier John Harbuckle's thoughts had been entirely engrossed in his "few lines" to his friend. His family concerns and affections had been, so to speak, buried under the fragment of Old London Wall. Only so short a time ago, as he had been writing so eagerly at that book-covered table, it had been to him as if he had not a relative in all the wide world, nor an interest more modern than the building of that wall; when lo! the Scotch clergyman's letter had come down like a bomb-shell, scattering the superincumbent mass, and had brought all John Harbuckle's family feeling on to the surface.

The old bachelor was always nervous about his women-folk; believing, in the depths of his heart, that in some things they were not much better than babies, and that if left to themselves they would inevitably get into terrible mischief.

Trembling with agitation John Harbuckle again went through Mr. Baird's letter. "Can I send a telegram at once? No, too late! Can't I catch the night mail? Too late—too late! What can I do? I must go to her at once! Dear, dear, dear me! Poor Mary! Poor Mary! What am I to do?" With many such exclamations he rose from his chair, and, with the fateful letter still in his hand, he began to pace up and down the room as if distracted.

"Something horrible must be behind this!" he cried, as he nervously worked the letter between his fingers. "Something he doesn't care to speak of must have forced him to write like this. He must have been driven to it. What can have happened? Good heavens! Perhaps she's half starving those dear girls. What can I do? Why did I listen to her? Why didn't I insist upon her coming



back with me after the funeral? It was my duty to have insisted. Why was I so weak? Poor things! Poor things! And I must waste the whole of this night! I'll go north by the first train to-morrow. Those poor dear girls! Why did I leave them? Why did I leave them?"

Good kind man, he never thought of blaming his sister. The fault was his own; he took it all on himself. Of course if you leave women to look after business matters, it is their nature to get into trouble as certainly as a young child will get into mischief; but in the last case the blame attaches to the nurse, not to the child; in the first to the man who neglects, not the woman who muddles.

"Mary and those girls in the hands of an unprincipled money-lender! My fault! My fault! Entirely my fault! I must have them somewhere under my own eyes. Poor Mary! She is—h'm! She is *difficult*. I feel I've been criminally weak. Yes, there's no other term for it, *criminally weak*—very difficult to deal with, I must admit; but I ought to have been firm. Poor dear girl!" (Mary was forty-six). "She always was too fond of her own way, but she's had many troubles. How could I have left her? And to think I can't reach her until late to-morrow!"

He paced unevenly about as much of the room as was vacant; but as he was in the habit of buying any odd piece of old furniture he thought really good and cheap, and of putting it down in any vacant place without much regard to suitability, the room by this time was far too crowded up for a comfortable walking-ground; so, instinctively, John Harbuckle determined to go out, feeling that there was a good dry piece of familiar pavement in front of the Trinity House near by quite at his disposal.

He glanced over the letter, then went slowly out on to the broad landing and up to the row of pegs where hung his overcoat and his hat. He struggled into a thick coat, put a soft and much used wide-awake over his scanty grey hair, and went down a few steps of a fine old panelled staircase until a baize door of the dingiest green came in sight. This door shut off his private apartments from the offices of Messrs. Harbuckle and Company, which occupied the ground floor.

"Poor dear Mary!" he again ejaculated, something in the look of the faded door recalling to him a Sunday, how long gone by he hardly cared to think, but around which the fresh beauty of childhood still lingered, when he, a strong lad of ten, had been running down those very stairs, and that same door had been pushed softly open, and his little sister Mary, returning from a voyage of discovery, had suddenly appeared, a miracle of three-years-old beauty. He had poised her lightly on his shoulder, and had run away with her upstairs; and his parents had laughed, how happily! how fondly! and had called her a flying cherub.

Very empty of humanity was the wide old house now. The parents were gone; the swift-footed boy was slow of movement.



"And Mary's a widow, poor girl! Poor girl! And I can't see her until this time to-morrow!" sighed John Harbuckle.

Past the baize door, slowly down a flight of stone stairs into a large entrance-hall went the master of the silent house. He put his latchkey into his pocket, and let himself out by a great double door that clangoured heavily behind him.

It was a cold moonlight night; it was the seventh of April. Close before him, as he left his own house, were the tall bare trees of the gardens of Trinity Square; beyond them, by lighted windows here and there, and a vast dim pile of battlements, the Tower of London made its awful presence vaguely felt.

From John Harbuckle's abode in the north-west angle of Trinity Square to the Trinity House was but a few dozen yards. John Harbuckle was accustomed to pacing up and down the open space in front of the Trinity House, and turned to it mechanically.

To-night, however, the Trinity House was brilliantly lighted up. Festivity evidently reigned among the Brethren. Had it not been for those "few lines," John Harbuckle himself would at that moment have been a guest; although so perturbed had he been that he had forgotten all about the feast.

He was in no mood for festivity, and he turned away, retraced his steps, passed his own house, paused for a moment under the worn hammered iron-work of the entrance to Catherine Court, Tower Hill, took a turn or two up and down that then deserted passage, heard his footsteps echo between the tall wall at the other end, instinctively raised his eyes to a certain window in one of the Georgian houses in the middle of the Court, and to the long iron lamp rod that runs out horizontally from the wall (the rod to which he had once thought of hanging himself—it was nearly opposite the house where *she* had lived), and then leaving the Court, he crossed Great Tower Hill, and, being provided with a private key, entered, by the gate facing a vast block of bonded warehouses, the Tower Gardens.

It was an awful solitude; but he was used to it, and it soothed him as he paced up and down the long path high above the great deep moat, that now was filled with moon-lighted mist. The Tower, with its grey walls, its bastions, its many lights, stood beyond the moat, the edge of each wall and turret gleaming white amid the heavy shadows of the great fortress.

To-night John Harbuckle took no notice of any of these things, beloved, venerated as they were by him; he paced up and down the long walk, himself the only human being in all those quiet gardens. There, in the heart of London, he might have heard his own footfall, or his own heart beat, so far away from worldly noise it all seemed; and yet, in reality, he was but a few yards below a public thoroughfare, along which many a fellow mortal was still tramping.

In half an hour or so he had grown calm; he had turned over his sister's affairs in his mind, and at last, after many an inward prayer,

for he was a God-fearing man, he came to a determination as to how he would act.

Having so determined, his thoughts, set free again, went back to other times ; to that circumstance of four-and-twenty years ago that had made him now an elderly bachelor.

He paced up and down the long walk above the moat, a solitary figure in the solemn moonlight, with his head bent, his hands clasped behind him, and in the silence he heard

"His heart throb for the love of other years."

Out of the past, out of the Scotch clergyman's letter, up from the mists of the Tower moat, there came to him one word, a name :

JESSIE.

And that name grew and grew until it filled all his thoughts.

Suddenly the stillness was broken up ; the garrison bugles sounded, while from innumerable clocks came ten strokes of various sound, and John Harbuckle left the Tower Gardens.

He left the Gardens by the gate nearest St. Katherine's Dock House, having just remembered that Woolcomb's letter was still in his pocket.

There was a pillar-box across the road, and there, a few minutes later, he saw the last of his "few lines."

Now it so happened that a large Continental steamer had lately arrived, and that, in consequence, a great many cabs were driving about ; which, as there happened to be also a very unusual amount of heavy traffic going on just then, caused some little difficulty.

At the precise moment John Harbuckle was recrossing the road from the pillar-box, the wheel of a cab got locked within the wheels of a railway van.

A man put his head out of the cab window, and called to the driver to mind what he was at.

John Harbuckle started, looked round quickly, but the man's head was already withdrawn.

"That voice ! If I didn't know he was dead, I'd have sworn to that voice." As the thought flashed through his brain, he went back a step and looked into the cab. There was nothing to be seen except a man's figure among many packages.

"Ah, I've been dreaming again ! The sea doesn't give up its dead in these days," said John Harbuckle, with a sigh. "I've been dreaming ! It's not good for a man to be alone. I'll go home and write to Mary at once. But—that voice !"

"No ! no ! no !" he went on, with an excitement that was gaining on him too rapidly to be controlled. "It's impossible ; yet, had it been possible, I'd have sworn to that voice !"

The upheaval caused by the Scotch clergyman's letter was as nothing compared to the fierce volcanic eruption produced by that voice.

"He robbed me of my Jessie ! Here, here—in these very

gardens!" he exclaimed, as he again turned into the long solitary walk above the moat, and began pacing it with hurried, uneven steps.

Before, he had thought of her, of him, with the sad calmness to which, during many years, he had grown used. Now time was, for the moment, annihilated. He was a young man again, with a young man's passionate love and hate; the wild agony of that loss was as real, as fresh, as if the blow had only just been struck.

"He robbed me of my Jessie!"

He hurried on mechanically to a certain spot, just as he had done four-and-twenty years ago.

At the other end of the walk, opposite the dark Beauchamp Tower, in which no spark of light now glimmered, there is a bench under some acacias; in front of the bench the stone coping merely slopes upwards a little without its usual low protecting wall.

John Harbuckle came up to that coping and looked straight down into the deep moat, now all full of moon-lighted vapour, and what he had felt on that other long-past night, when he had all but thrown himself down, came back to him.

Hundreds of times he had stood there since, but it was many years since he had lived that fierce hour over again as he lived it now.

That voice, belong it to whom it might, had touched a spring that was vibrating through every fibre of his being.

"He robbed me of my Jessie!"

The loss of her was as fresh as ever to-night.

He stood for a long while on that sloped coping above the moat until the storm had spent itself.

"Do I forgive?" his conscience asked his heart, as soon as it could make itself heard above the inward tumult.

"Do I forgive?"

The question came from the depths of his own soul, but the great prison fortress standing before him in the fitful moonlight gave a strange weight and solemnity to the words.

"Do I forgive? Ah! with the dead there can be no quarrel. They are in God's hands."

He looked up earnestly to a clear space between great banks of clouds that had opened above the centre of the four turrets of the White Tower. Through that pure space, it seemed to him, one might travel upwards for ever and for ever, so high and lifted up it looked.

"And now she is in Heaven, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, she seems once more mine," he felt. "Do I forgive? I do; with all my heart I do."

It was long before he left that spot; as he turned away at last he said, with a heavy sigh and a sad relapse into something of his accustomed tone:

"Ah, well, God's ways are past finding out. Arthur Bayliss robbed me of my Jessie, and now Providence is going to give me their Jessie to care for. Amen."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MAN IN THE CAB.

"I COULD have sworn to that voice!" and with the words rushing across his brain, John Harbuckle had turned to look into a cab, the wheel of which was locked within the wheel of a heavy waggon.

He had seen in the cab a man's figure sitting among many packages, but the face was too far in the shadow to render recognition possible; even supposing the face to have been one John Harbuckle might have recognised.

A moment or two later the cab wheel was free, and as John Harbuckle unlocked the gate of the Tower Gardens, the cab-driver put his horse to a brisk pace and drove towards the Minories.

The man in the cab sat with one arm extended over his packages, gazing through the windows at the blank rows of closed shops.

"A desolate home-coming!" he said to himself bitterly. "Home! What right have I to use such a term, except that I can't help it, it haunts me so! All this great city full—home I have none; and to me just now, a home seems the only thing in the world worth having, the only thing I really care for. What a vast desolate place it is; all this great city full, home I have none!"

The words repeated themselves over and over again like an endless monotonous chime heard in sickness.

There was a strange ghostlike solemnity about the City at ten o'clock on that moonlight night. To the man in the cab the deserted streets seemed full of grave-stones.

Along Cheapside, Fleet Street and the Strand things looked brighter, but even there, except in the printing houses, the huge town seemed tired and anxious to settle down for the night.

The cab turned up one of the streets leading to Covent Garden and stopped before the Tavistock Hotel, a house at that time much frequented by visitors from the colonies.

A commissioner opened the cab-door and the man got out.

He was tall and had to stoop a good deal as he did so.

The porters rapidly cleared the cab, while the owner of all the packages stood under the lighted colonnade in front of the hall door, looking on with the air of one accustomed to have everything done for him.

A well-made man he was, tall, straight, square-shouldered, and he stood so firmly that, if in all else he had not seemed strictly a

civilian, one might have taken him for a soldier. One rarely sees a civilian stand as this man stood.

The upper part of his face was overshadowed by the brim of a hard wide-awake: the lower part was hidden by a thick moustache and a heavy beard, both still showing here and there some traces of the original brown among the grey. The beard was well-tended, crisp and curly.

He paid the cab-driver liberally, walked into the hall, gave a few orders, went upstairs to the coffee-room, which was upon the first floor.

He had rather a lordly way with him that secured prompt attention.

His strong, buffalo-hide portmanteaus, which all bore the name of "Arnold Birkett," were much stuck about with Continental labels.

It would not have been difficult to have traced his route from Lisbon to Hamburg, nor, had anyone taken the trouble to search, to have found evidence, that the said Arnold Birkett had not so very long ago been a passenger on board one of the African Mail Steamers.

The coffee-room of the Tavistock was long and low, with much dark mahogany about it; an eminently respectable, but by no means fashionable apartment.

At one of the tables Mr. Birkett seated himself, ordered supper, the evening papers, and a fire in his room. He took his hat off as he did so, showing a tolerably broad forehead, a nose straight and well-cut, but hardly of sufficient importance to be quite in keeping with the rest of his appearance. His still abundant hair was fast turning from brown to grey; it was close cut, but had a distinct tendency to curl; a tendency strictly repressed by its owner, who was, on the whole, a man not very far from handsome, although there was a yellowish tone about as much of his face as could be seen that was not beautiful.

He read his papers with avidity, ate his supper like a man used to the ways of decent society, asked to be shown his room, and then retired, without having exchanged a syllable with anyone except the waiters.

"A desolate home-coming," said Arnold Birkett to himself, as he stirred up the fire in his room and made it roar. "Not one word of welcome; not so much as a dog to look pleased! Ah, well! ah, well! what else could I expect? How could it be otherwise?" and he drew up a comfortable and very roomy easy-chair, well lined and padded, all covered with a cretonne as gay as English poppies and cornflowers could make it.

"Might have been worse!" spreading out his hands before the glowing coals. "A blazing fire in an open grate is something friendly, after all; and so"—with a shiver—"and so's this beastly old climate! Don't I recognise it! One's dear native land has its

drawbacks. I say, what's this?" with another shiver, and his fingers on his pulse. "I shouldn't care to be laid up here with a rattling dose of African fever, and not a soul to look after one."

He felt his pulse carefully, and finding it not so very feverish, lighted a briar-wood pipe that had grown dear to him by long usage, in which operation he appeared suddenly to become wholly engrossed.

When the pipe was drawing to his satisfaction, he again stirred up the fire and settled down to smoke and meditate.

His meditations could hardly have been pleasant ones. He looked troubled, at times distressed.

Presently he took a small Russian leather case from his side pocket, opened it, gazed attentively at the portraits it contained, kissed them both affectionately, but rather in the manner of a man performing a customary act of devotion, to which some passing emotion restores, for the moment, the freshness that constant repetition has impaired, and then placed the case open before him on the mantelpiece, supporting it against an imitation Etruscan vase; and now and then looking up at it, he went on smoking.

Both the photographs were considerably faded, as if they had been taken some years since.

One was the portrait of a woman whose face you could imagine might in life have been still almost youthful; a face it was that seemed made to look always bright, but which had grown, either from care or ill-health, sad and prematurely worn.

The other face was too faded to convey much meaning of any sort; but by the dress one might judge it was the portrait of a girl of ten or twelve, taken perhaps about eight or ten years ago.

Mother and daughter without a doubt. One might have thought they were Arnold Birkett's wife and daughter, if, when he had finished his pipe, he had not so carefully, and as it were secretively, returned the portraits to his side-pocket; as if he did not care to have them seen by other eyes.

"How different it all might have been!" he sighed, as he replaced the case.

Evidently he had said the same words in exactly the same way many and many a time before.

Then his manner suddenly changed. He took out the case again, looked at the portraits again, a moisture as of tears that would never be shed dimming his eyes, and he whispered, kissing them fervently, as if they had suddenly come back to him, fresh and unfaded:

"Forgive me, my darlings! Forgive me, forgive me! How could I help it?"

Then, putting up the case again, he threw himself on his knees by the bedside, flung his arms across the bed and buried his face against the counterpane.



Was he trying to make excuses to heaven? Was he bewailing the past? Was he seeking help for the morrow? Who can tell?

If he has done a great wrong, will he have to bear the inevitable consequences for ever? Is there never forgiveness; or, if forgiveness, is there for ever no release from the thralldom of one fatal act?

Ah, the dead woman *is* dead; the broken heart *is* shattered, beyond human skill to restore; the child's young life jeopardised may, perhaps, be ruined now.

He was long awake that night, but at length he slept soundly. Not once did the thoughts that had kept his brain wakeful, fashion themselves into a dream. Not on that night did that mother and child haunt him. He was so lonely that he would have been glad of their welcome had it been but in a dream.

## CHAPTER V.

"OH PAST THAT IS!"

"IN those other days, I should simply have climbed to the knife-board of a City omnibus and have gone down to the Bank; now I suppose, that would be gross waste of time," said Arnold Birkett, as he finished his breakfast the next morning. "Which is the best way to get down to the City in these days?" he asked the waiter.

"Depends on what you call 'best,' sir," returned the man. "If you want to cross the river twice, see the Abbey, the 'Ouses of Parliament, the Embankment and cetera, why for that your best plan's Charing Cross to Cannon Street."

"Charing Cross! Why, the City used to lie in the opposite direction in my time!"

"So it does now, sir, only we start west to go east, that's all. You'll find the river rowt quite an interesting little tower; I always recommend it, and ten minutes will do it, if you don't get blocked outside Cannon Street."

"Sounds inviting! And the Underground, what's that like?"

"Not been by the Underground!—then you've a treat in store, sir! The infernal regions in a Christmas pantomime isn't anything near as like the real thing; only I shouldn't care to have a bad conscience when I go by the Underground; the sulphureousness of it is so life-like, it brings it 'ome to a man, and no mistake!"

"Then I'll go by the Underground," said Birkett.

"Charing Cross to Mansion 'Ouse then, sir. Do you know the way?"

"Oh yes, thanks, I can find it. This part of London isn't so very much changed. Where's the Underground Station?"

"You'll find it where old Hungerford Market used to be."

"All right, I remember."



So after Mr. Birkett had looked through every paper in the room, and had watched a foreign fruit auction in Covent Garden, he went to Charing Cross and booked for the Mansion House.

How his conscience was affected by the short journey I may not tell; but I rather imagine that the atmosphere of the Underground so irritated both his throat and temper, that conscience was not roused to painful activity by the "sulphureousness" of the air he was compelled to breathe.

He did not look amiable as he sprang up the metal-edged stairs and towards the upper world.

"Mansion House! Where's the Mansion House?" he coughed, looking about him, when he reached the open air. "Where on earth am I? Well," with another cough, "if that voyage through Pandemonium is a specimen of what modern science can do, all I can say is, I greatly prefer the canoe of the raw native! But where am I? Oh, that's the new street, I suppose; and this? why this must be Cannon Street. Fine street, the new one! London's grown much taller and brighter and wider since I last saw it. Mansion House? I see! Well, I won't explore that brand-new thoroughfare just now, I'll keep to the old ways if I can find them."

And he went down Cannon Street, paused when he came to the station, took a good look at it, went on to King William's statue, which he was glad to find standing just where he had left it, with the granite cable still wound round and round as if it had never been uncoiled since last he saw it.

"Now I know where I am!" he said, after he had safely crossed the crowded street. "That statue's a land-mark I'm not likely to forget!"

He turned the corner and went along Eastcheap, here recognising a well-remembered house, there observing a newer and grander building.

As he was passing the end of Rood Lane he pulled himself up sharply:

"That's the very identical harp-player, and in the very self-same place!" he exclaimed.

He took a few steps up the lane.

"Where's your blind friend, with the violin?" he asked.

"In Abraham's bosom, sir," was the grave reply.

"And you haven't found another?" asked Birkett.

The harpist, who had never ceased playing, shook his head sadly.

Birkett gave him a shilling, and, retracing his steps, soon turned the angle of the road and was in Great Tower Street, and his face, which had been grave enough before, grew graver still, as his eyes caught sight of one of the corner turrets of the White Tower.

"Ah! I feel where I am now, feel it to the deepest depths of my heart!" he said. "I could find my way from here to there blindfold! O the past, the past, the irrevocable past!"

He walked on steadily. Two turrets of the White Tower and a few boughs, just touched with green, now filled all the open space at the end of the street.

"Oh, this is awful! This is like going to her grave! I can't stand it! I won't go on; not to-day!" he felt, rather than said, in his heart.

But he never turned; he went straight on.

"The very church! It won't do to look at it!"

But yet he paused before the porch of All Hallows, Barking, nearly at the end of the street.

His brows contracted as if with sharp pain and his eyes gazed at the fast-closed door as if they would pierce it.

"The same! No—altered like all the rest—something new amidst the old, and yet the same! And I too, am altered; yet—would to God I were not the same! It must all be faced. I'll face it now if it kills me. Oh, if it would—if only it would! I ask nothing better than to be blotted out of existence this moment!"

Vain wish! Not so easily can the burden of life be laid down. No, if that weight cuts into the galled shoulders until they bleed, the burden must still be borne, unless—there is a Divine Promise comes in here. I need not quote it, so familiar are its gracious words to all. Happy they who have by experience learned its truth!

Tower Street was crowded with huge waggons and many cabs. The grinding of the heavy wheels, the sharp click of the hard hoofs against the stone roadway never ceased; the air was laden with the smell of spicery and drugs; familiar sounds, familiar scents, bringing back how many a long by-gone day!

Birkett went on to the end of the street, and crossed a wide space among fish vans and the waggons of the bonded carmen to the pavement in front of the railings of the Tower Gardens.

Down below in the moat soldiers were being drilled, to the great amusement of a throng of squalid idlers.

Birkett went up to the rails, and stood between a group of Norwegian sailors and a ragged urchin, as dirty and as picturesque as any Murillo ever painted, who was hanging on to the rails grinning with pure delight at the spectacle.

The Tower, the glancing of arms in the moat, the strip of well-kept garden, the trees, two or three carefully dressed children with their attendant nurse-maid, bowling their hoops by the side of the fresh-dug flower-beds, where daffodils and primroses were blooming, made up a scene only too well remembered.

Birkett stood for some time watching the children playing about the same path along which on the night before John Harbuckle had slowly paced, thinking of his love of other days, and his face grew as wan as if he had had a severe illness.

"The Tower Gardens! Through what dreams, what fevers, what

days and nights of desolation have I seen those Tower Gardens!" he said, turning away from them.

Do you remember that last evening John Harbuckle, when he had found the pavement in front of the Trinity House too bright for him, had strolled up and down Catherine Court a few times before going into the Tower Gardens?

Arnold Birkett, seeking refuge from the noise and crowding waggons that filled all the south-west side of Tower Hill, re-crossed the road and followed the houses until he came to the weather-worn old ironwork above the gateway of that very same court.

In the busiest time of the City day that court is comparatively quiet, as there is no thoroughfare, except for foot-passengers.

The houses where the rich Russian merchants used to live, in the days of the great Catherine, are homes no longer, merely business premises; but good, solid, red-brick houses they are still, with long, narrow windows, and white sashes flush with the walls.

To one of those long, narrow windows Arnold Birkett raised his eyes, and for a few seconds kept them there. It was the same window that John Harbuckle so often looked up at. It belonged to the house where SHE had lived.

Nearly opposite was the horizontal lamp rod, with its curious gridiron-like appendage, to which John Harbuckle had once thought of hanging himself. Arnold Birkett had never thought of hanging *himself* there, so he took no notice of it; but he did notice the stone steps of the house, now worn hollow in the middle by constant use, and he thought, with a strange mingling of tender grief and self-reproachful bitterness, how often her little feet had come across the threshold and down those stone steps to meet him—beautiful little feet, that would never come to meet him any more!

He turned away, as a clerk followed by an office boy sprang up the worn steps of the house where she had lived; he walked slowly and with bowed head, as if following a coffin to the grave, to the other end of the court, and then came back again.

The court itself, with its broad pavement and two lines of large houses, is not without a certain dignity. A very small amount of imagination could easily fill it with grave, bewigged and bewaist-coated merchants; ladies with powdered heads, patches and flowered damask gowns; sedan-chairs, link-boys, and all that goes with the date on the oblong tablet, set in relief on a square stone on one of the walls, where one may read, in characters such as one sees in a Tonson edition of *The Spectator*—

"Catherine Court, 1725."\*

To leave the Court for Tower Hill you turn from the straight,

\* 1725. The year in which Peter the Great died and was succeeded by the Empress Catherine.

broad pavement, and follow a path that twists by the side of a genuine shop of the period, which some artist ought to sketch at once, for although it can hardly be called lovely, it is still but little altered from its original condition, and will, no doubt, soon be either taken down or modernised.

Arnold Birkett was looking on the ground as the path wound out of the Court, but as he stood again under the fast-decaying ironwork at its entrance he raised his haggard eyes and met a view unique in all the world.

It flashed upon him like a sudden marvel of fresh beauty now, as it had done many and many a time before.

There just before him were the budding trees and the fresh green grass of Trinity Square; and behind that filmy veil of delicate green, all "clad in colours of the air," stood the great pile of the Tower buildings, a multitude of great lines, harmonious yet broken up into a variety of detail most grateful even to eyes that knew not why they were charmed.

Long straight walls, bold round bastions, the great square White Tower with its four turrets, each differing, but each crowned; the light belfry of St. Peter's Church (where sleep three headless queens), the many-chimneyed dwellings, the quaint Look-Out of the Bell Tower standing in mid-air sheer against the blue sky—a mast or two beyond.

"And we have looked at it all together how many a time! how many a time! She, my darling, was with me when I first saw it. It is all too beautiful, too dreadful! All too like a dream, all too sadly real! Oh, Jessie! Jessie! forgive, forgive me, dear!"

Too real! There was a freshness in the new verdure of the trees that made that scene more life-like to Arnold Birkett than anything else he had yet re-visited.

He would have been thankful for some refuge then; but the church door he had not long passed was close barred, there was no resting-place there; the Tower Gardens and those of Trinity Square were only for the privileged few; there was no place for quiet, no place where grief could have its way unobserved; and, as an Englishman cannot show his feelings if he is observed, Arnold Birkett followed the unwritten law of the City and moved on.

He moved on mechanically to John Harbuckle's house, noticed the name was still where it used to be; then he went no further.

At the corner, by the great block of bonded warehouses, an old Irish woman, who swept the crossing there, implored him, in a ghost of a voice, for the love of heaven to help her in supporting her starving family.

He put his hand in his pocket and gave her sixpence, for which she called down the blessings of all the saints upon his head.

After he had gone a few steps in the direction of Barking church-

yard, which is immediately behind the bonded warehouses, he returned, and adding another sixpence to his gift, asked :

"Have you held this crossing long?"

"Lord bless you, my good gentleman, and it's me poor children'll have such a supper to-night——"

"How long?" repeated Birkett, cutting her short.

"Near seven years, sir."

"Then you know most of the people in the square? Does anyone live in that house?" pointing to John Harbuckle's. "The ground floor is offices, I see. Does anyone live there?"

"Only the old gentleman, sir," replied the woman; "and many's the shilling he's given me, or sure I'd be starved."

"What old gentleman?" asked Birkett.

"Mr. Harbuckle, sir."

"Any ladies?"

"Lord love you, sir! no, sir!" exclaimed the sweeper, dropping her professional whine. "Mr. Harbuckle's an old bachelor gentleman, and there's never a lady there; leastways, only Mr. and Mrs. Robbins as does for him."

"Well! Good morning."

"Good morning, sir, and God bless you, and send you this way again very soon."

With which benediction still in his ears, Mr. Birkett turned into Barking churchyard.

"Then he's still there! My poor little girl, where is she? He knows! Dare I ask him?"

So thinking he walked on, looking as much shaken as if he had had a severe illness.

John Harbuckle had already posted his letter to his sister in the North. He had written it late the night before. It was dated April 7th.

*(To be continued.)*



## HEAVENLY PROBLEMS.

IN these days of widely-diffused knowledge most people are familiar with the idea that there are innumerable inhabited worlds scattered throughout the universe. Yet it seems probable that the globes which are capable of sustaining vegetable and animal life are comparatively few—much fewer, indeed, than we might *à priori* be led to suppose. Of the heavenly bodies within the range of human vision, assisted by the most powerful telescopes, the vast majority are suns, which may be the centres of systems of planets like our own solar system, but which are manifestly unfit for habitation themselves.

It is curious to reflect how few of the members of the solar system appear to be fitted for the maintenance of life. Mercury is too near the sun for any forms of earth-life to exist with comfort on his surface. Of course beings adapted to so hot a climate might have been evolved there, just as there are men who can live comfortably round the earth's equator; but so far as can be ascertained Mercury has no atmosphere. His mass, less than half that of the earth, had probably not sufficient gravity to retain an atmosphere, which would consequently be dissipated into space as he travelled round the sun. Mercury's day, like our own, is about twenty-four hours long; and we know that he has mountains which, relatively to his size, are very high. Yet in all probability no spark of life, animal or vegetable, has ever existed there, and he swings through space a desert world.

It is probable that Venus and Mars, our nearest neighbours, are both inhabited. Venus is just a little smaller than the earth; her day is twenty-three hours long, and she has an atmosphere which probably contains aqueous vapour like our own. But—and this "but" constitutes the main external difference between Venus and the earth—she is much nearer the sun than we are, her distance being sixty-six millions of miles against our ninety-five millions. The consequent additional heat on Venus would probably render it uncomfortably warm for human beings.

There may, however, be modifying conditions, and it is possible that our sister planet, the beautiful evening star, teems with life not materially different from that which exists on the earth. In one respect at least the inhabitants of Venus are worse off than we are—they have no moon.

Everybody knows, of course, that Mars is inhabited.

Has not M. Flammarion conceived the idea of signalling to its inhabitants across the abyss of thirty-three million eight hundred

thousand miles, which, when they are nearest, separates us from them? And since the publication of Mr. H. G. Wells's weirdly-exciting story, "The War of the Worlds," none of us would be much surprised if, some fine morning, the Martians made a descent upon the earth.

Seriously it is practically certain that Mars is inhabited by beings of a high order of intelligence.

The facts which have been demonstrated about this planet are: 1. That it possesses an atmosphere much thinner than ours, but still effective and sufficient; 2. That it possesses water; 3. That its water supply is running so dangerously low that its seas are practically dried up, leaving the planet dependent for water mainly on the melting of its polar snows; 4. That there are a great number of fine lines visible on its surface (the so-called canals), the character of which strongly favours the supposition that they have been artificially produced. It is highly probable that these lines, whether themselves canals or the vegetation which borders canals, are the visible evidence of a gigantic, world-wide system of irrigation which scarcity of water has compelled the Martians to adopt.

Life on Mars has no doubt existed millions of years longer than on the earth, and its inhabitants are so much further advanced on the path of evolution. Therefore it is possible that their science and art are immeasurably superior to ours, that their knowledge of the universe is infinitely greater, and that, as one example, they may possess optical instruments of such enormous power that our best telescopes would be mere clumsy playthings beside them.

The inhabitants of Mars may know much more about the history of the earth than we know ourselves. They may have watched the formation of its crust, the origin and development of life on its surface, the slow evolution of man, the rise and decay of his cities and empires, the hurricanes, earthquakes, and fires which have devastated our globe; and they may be watching us closely and, let us hope, benevolently now. We would fain condole with them on their own great calamity—the scarcity of water—and express a fervent hope that their supply of this precious fluid may never be less than it is now.

So far as human science can determine, none of the other members of the solar system are inhabited, though it is certain that we know very little about the matter.

The asteroids, which occupy the huge gap between Mars and Jupiter, may or may not be the remnants of a shattered planet, but they are not fitted to maintain life. Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune are probably still in a state of incandescence. They are molten fire, and shine mainly by their own light, being, in a sense, suns on a small scale. Manifestly, they are not habitable. They may, however, by their light and heat, be the means of



sustaining life on their satellites, of which Jupiter has four, Saturn eight, Uranus four, and Neptune one.

Apart from this possibility, it is strange to think that, although the solar system has been in existence for untold millions of years, its largest members are as yet unfit to maintain life. Millions of years more must elapse before they emerge from the period of fiery youth and have cooled sufficiently to be fit for habitation. Even then such life as we have on the Earth could not exist on them, because of their immensely greater distance from the Sun.

Viewed from the "habitable" standpoint, one is struck by the awful slowness of stellar and planetary processes. Perhaps, however, the final cause of the universe is *not* the production of worlds adapted to sustain vegetable and animal life. The shining globes around us may have other and higher purposes to fulfil.

Sparsely as the solar system is inhabited, it is liable to be deprived, at some time or other, even of its existing population by a catastrophe which may befall the sun. The Comets of 1843 and 1880 (possibly both the same comet) passed within about 190,000 miles of the sun. This is dangerously near. The late Mr. Proctor thought that the comet of 1843 would most certainly in time fall into the sun. It is an appalling possibility. The result would be an immense increase in the sun's light and heat, which might be transient, lasting only a few days or even hours, but it would be sufficient to destroy all the higher forms of vegetable or animal life on the Earth, and probably also on Venus and Mars. Thus would the solar system become entirely what apparently it mainly is already, a brilliant galaxy of lifeless worlds. We can only hope that this threatening comet may be destroyed or dissipated by collision with some other heavenly body long before this catastrophe to the sun can take place!

But we have the consolation of knowing that they were all created for some wise purpose, and sooner or later must fulfil their destiny. To our finite minds millions of years suggest an appalling space of time, but to Him Who is from everlasting to everlasting, in Whose sight a thousand years are but as a day, time does not exist, and cannot be measured.

## THE SCAPEGOAT.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

## CHAPTER I.

SIR JOHN CLAVERING.

IT was a green Christmas, bright, lovely, and almost as warm as spring: and as the congregation of a small rustic church in Worcestershire, only a few miles removed from its chief town, wended their way homewards, they congratulated each other on the weather as much as on the day itself. Every one had walked to church, for carriages on a day such as this were not needed.

With one exception. An old gentleman of eighty years, ruddy and strong in appearance, but walking with difficulty, came out leaning on a lady's arm; a tall slender woman, with a sharp, pale face and keen dark eyes. It was Sir John Clavering. All belonging to his party, excepting this lady, had walked on; but near to the waiting pony-carriage stood one of his grandsons, a tall young man with light hair, whose fair fresh Saxon face and good-natured blue eyes were something pleasant to look upon. He had waited to assist his grandfather into the carriage; but the lady looked round impatiently, as if wishing for some other help to be given.

"Take care, Tom," said Sir John; "not this leg, but the other."

"Would you like me to drive you, sir?" asked the young man when he had placed him carefully in.

"Aye, do; my hands are cold and useless, in spite of the weather."

But the lady interposed, putting the questioner aside with cool indifference; then stepped in herself. He did not appear to resent this in the least, for he had been used to nothing but contemptuous indifference all his life, and he arranged her garments with as much careful attention as he had given to Sir John.

"I was not aware that you intended to go with Sir John yourself, Lady Lydia," he remarked in tones of apology.

"Possibly not. There, that will do," she said, cutting him short. "Give me the reins."

"No," interposed Sir John, who retained all his old detestation of being driven by a woman. "Give them to me, Tom. I will drive myself, Lydia."

With a flourish of the whip and a cheery nod to the few peasantry who had waited to watch the departure, Sir John Clavering and his widowed daughter-in-law drove off. Not quickly; many acquaintances

were waiting for a friendly word. Sir John nodded to one, called out a kindly greeting to another, stopped to shake hands with a third. Altogether it was some little time before he and Lady Lydia were clear of the churchyard.

The young man with the crisp Saxon curls and the long legs had walked well away by that time. Overtaking two ladies, evidently mother and daughter, nice-looking women with clearly-cut features and delicate complexions, he stopped to speak.

"Mrs. Orde, I wish you a merry Christmas."

Mrs. Orde turned.

"Oh, is it you, Tom Clavering? Thank you; I wish you the same."

Her tone was not cordial, and in her manner she seemed to have taken a leaf out of Lady Lydia Clavering's book. The younger lady, Miss Orde, did not speak at all, but glanced shyly at the intruder, an involuntary smile of welcome in her rich brown eyes, a flush deepening on her lovely cheeks.

Tom Clavering just touched her hand.

"And a very merry Christmas to you, Millicent," he said in low tones, as he walked on by her side.

The little carriage came rattling up, and Sir John checked the pony.

"What has become of Orde to-day that he was not at church?" he called out.

Mrs. Orde went round to Sir John's side.

"I am sorry to say he is ill—one of his old bilious attacks. We left him in bed."

"In bed!" echoed Sir John. "That won't do at all. You know we dine at five to-day, and he must not fail us."

"I hope not—I trust he will be better by that time."

Lady Lydia's keen dark eyes were taking in everything, as they had a habit of doing. Tom Clavering was talking to Miss Orde, and she noted the young lady's flushed face and downcast eyes as she listened. Lady Lydia Clavering drew in her thin lips, disliking the signs. But at that moment there came up from the opposite direction one who could always dispel the gloom on her face, her eldest and best-beloved son.

He very much resembled his mother, tall, thin, dark, with the same keen eyes and compressed lips. His black moustache was fierce even for a soldier, very fierce indeed for those days when such ornaments were not often seen; and he had a fashionable, worn, dissipated look. But Captain Clavering was popular with his friends, and it seemed that he must get leave twice to every other officer's once, for he was always coming down.

"Jarvis," began Sir John, "why were you not at church to-day?"

"I overslept myself, sir?"

"Overslept yourself! Well, I don't know. I asked after you

before I came out, and Jones told me you were letter-writing in your room. I choose every one about me to go to church on Christmas Day, and I thought you knew that."

Jarvis Clavering slowly raised his hat by way of response, a keen observer—which Sir John was not—might have seen covert sarcasm in the action. With a hearty good-bye to Mrs. and Miss Orde, Sir John drove on.

The young Claverings—Jarvis was seven-and-twenty, Tom three years younger—walked on with Mrs. and Miss Orde. But as the road narrowed they separated, Mrs. Orde walking by the side of Captain Clavering, Millicent falling behind with Tom. And Lady Lydia, although she ostensibly had her back to them, bowling on in the direction of Beechhurst, saw the position just as well as Mrs. Orde saw it. It did not last long; for at the entrance to an enclosed grove, Mrs. Orde turned off, wishing the young men good morning.

Turning down an avenue of beeches almost opposite, they went on towards Beechhurst. A large old-fashioned mansion, built of red brick. Not a word spoke the young men to each other; Tom's intelligent eye was noting all points as they walked, with the air of one who knows well every inch of the land; the officer looked straight before him, seeing nothing. He was buried in thought; and not pleasant thought. As they came in view of a small comfortable-looking dwelling, he pointed towards it.

"Go across and tell Simmons I shall want him to go out with me early to-morrow morning. And tell him to mind that he brings my own gun this time."

There was supercilious command in every tone of the voice, every gesture of the hand. Tom Clavering obeyed, showing no resentment. Half-way through the trees a thought struck him, and he turned round.

"To-morrow morning, Jarvis?"

"I said to-morrow morning. Can't you hear?"

Lady Lydia met her son in the hall, which was large and lofty, and where, at the far end, a wood fire was crackling. Grasping his arm as one in anger or pain, she drew him to this fire; and they stood there, ostensibly warming their hands before going in to luncheon. She spoke eagerly, impressively, but so quietly that a servant passing could scarcely have noticed that her lips moved.

"You vex me every hour of your existence, Jarvis. Why are you not more cautious? You fly in the face of Sir John's prejudices in the most reckless manner possible. To think that you should have stayed away from church to-day, of all days!"

"A man worried as I am has no fancy for church, or for anything else," returned Captain Clavering, in half-indifferent, half-sullen tones. "As to studying the old man's prejudices—whether I study them or whether I don't, it seems to come to the same thing; no money, and no chance of money. Have you asked him again?"

"No, if I entered upon business matters to-day, he would not listen to me. Jarvis, I really don't think I shall be able to get it. I have had so much from him, for you, that I am driven out of my very wits to invent excuses. I can't say it's for Louisa this time, because she's here, and he might question her about it himself; neither can I say it is for Reginald, for the same reason. In these rare visits that Reginald pays us, I am kept in a state of chronic terror, lest Sir John should speak to him and discover that he knows nothing of the sums he is supposed to have drawn. Jarvis, I only speak the truth when I say I do not think I can obtain money for you this time."

Captain Clavering lifted his shapely boot and pushed a falling log on to the blazing hearth.

"I must have it somehow; I can't do without it. It would be ruin and double ruin to me."

"Why don't you make better use of your time with Millicent Orde?"

"Why don't I? You must ask that question of her, my lady. She is a vast deal more inclined to make play with the scapegoat, than she is with me. I have always said so."

"Psha!" irritably spoke Lady Lydia. "That is perfectly absurd, Jarvis; and you know it. He mate with Millicent Orde!"

"I know that she likes him, and does not like me."

"Not so loud, Jarvis. I tell you, you might as well accuse her of liking her father's bailiff. You—what did you say, Jones?" as a servant came out of the dining-room, and spoke.

"Luncheon is waiting, my lady, and Sir John is asking for you."

Lady Lydia went into the dining-room. But the expression "Luncheon is waiting," was a mere figure of speech. Sir John Clavering never waited luncheon for any one, and had now nearly finished his own. It was a very light meal; they had breakfasted at nine and would dine at five; the latter hour chosen especially to accommodate the children.

The table was somewhat small and seemed rather crowded; but Lady Lydia's own place was vacant. All Sir John's descendants, Tom Clavering excepted, who had not yet come in, were gathered there to-day. He had no children living; these were their children and grandchildren. Two fine young men of nineteen—twins—sat next to him, Bede and Charles, sons of his eldest son. Jarvis, Reginald, and Louisa were the children of Lady Lydia; Reginald a short, slight young man, quiet and steady, a barrister in chambers. Louisa was the wife of Colonel Letsom, and the three little children on the other side of the table were hers. All had come as usual to Sir John for Christmas. Captain Clavering, who had followed his mother in, looked round for a seat.

"You children must sit closer together," remarked Lady Lydia. "They might have taken their luncheon upstairs, Louisa, as they are going to dine with us. Make room for your Uncle Jarvis."

"You can take my seat, Jarvis," interposed Sir John, taking his stick to help him from the room. Jarvis, who was feeling very cross, said something about hoping the dinner-table would not be so crowded; one or two of his friends might drop in unexpectedly.

"The table is always large enough," said Lady Lydia. "In case of an unexpected guest Tom Clavering must dine below."

"I'll be shot if he shall!" exclaimed young Bede, with all the authority of Sir John's heir. "It is Christmas Day, Aunt Lydia, and Tom shall have his place at table for once as well as the rest of us. What would Millicent Orde say?"

He threw out this little lance mischievously. Lady Lydia's flushed face betrayed her annoyance, but she would not appear to notice it; and just then Tom Clavering came in. No one moved or made room for him. Tom settled the matter by lifting up one of the little Letsoms, taking the chair himself, and putting the child on his knee. Sociable, cordial and pleasant, it was impossible not to like Tom Clavering, and the child laughed, and put up its fat arm to the smiling Saxon face.

Later Lady Lydia went up to Sir John's room. She was in the habit of sitting with him almost constantly. There had been some trouble latterly with poachers on the estate, and in talking of it (did she lead to it purposely?) Sir John grew excited. About half-past four she went down again; Tom Clavering was then standing over the hall fire, and she told him it was Sir John's pleasure that he and Simmons, the gamekeeper, should watch that night in the oak coppice.

Tom Clavering was surprised. Sir John was one who not only liked to enjoy Christmas himself, but wished others to enjoy it also. He enquired whether Lady Lydia was not mistaken.

"Not in the least," she decisively replied. "Something has come to Sir John's knowledge about gins and snares being laid there; and this evening, when all the world is supposed to be indoors making merry, will be their opportunity. With the utmost haste you can make by starting now, you and Simmons will not reach the oak coppice before dark. You have not a moment to lose!"

"But Sir John does not wish me to go before dinner?"

"Sir John wishes you and expects you to go at once," was the rejoinder. "You will not disobey him, I hope."

"I have never disobeyed him yet, Lady Lydia, or wished to do so," was the young man's answer, as he turned towards the staircase. "I'll change my coat and go."

Lady Lydia said no more. Her eldest son was coming in at the hall door with one of the unexpected friends he had mentioned, and she turned to greet them.

Tom went on his way. As he was passing his grandfather's door, Sir John opened it and looked out.

"Is that you, Tom? What's the time?"

"About twenty minutes to five, sir."

"So late? Come and help me into my coat. I shall be having Orde here. I begin to think sometimes, Tom," added the old man, as he walked through his sitting-room to his bedroom, "that I shall be reduced to the effeminacy of taking a valet in my old age. These legs and arms won't serve me much longer."

"Make a valet of me, sir. You might let me help you more than you do."

"I don't like to give in, Tom, having waited on myself all my life; that's it. Sit down by the fire until I am ready. You are ready yourself, I see."

"Ready for what, sir?" asked the young man in surprise.

"For what? Why, for dinner!"

"But I am not to dine with you to-day, sir. I am going on the watch at once with Simmons, as you desired."

"Going on the watch with Simmons!" echoed Sir John, turning his fine old face on the speaker. "On the watch on Christmas night! No, no—my boy! No one belonging to me does that. What put such an idea into your head?"

"Lady Lydia has just told me——" Tom Clavering stopped. He was a true gentleman at heart, and not even in this instance, bare-faced though it was, would he take his own part. "That is," he resumed, "I understood Lady Lydia to say you wished me to go off on the watch with Simmons to-night. Perhaps she misunderstood you."

"You must have misunderstood her, Tom. Send my people out on the watch on Christmas night!" he repeated. "I'm not quite a heathen, Tom."

"Lady Lydia said something about gins in the oak coppice. What have you heard, sir?"

"What I've heard will keep till to-morrow, Tom. She ought not to have begun about it to-day, for she knows the subject worries me. It was she who heard about it, not I. There, that will do. What's that?"

A smart knock at the door and Lady Lydia entered. Sir John attacked her at once about the misunderstanding, and told her that she ought to have known better than suppose he should allow any of his people to go out watching on Christmas night.

Tom Clavering left the room, and had scarcely reached the hall below when he heard himself called. Lady Lydia, her pale face flushed, her eyes blazing with anger, had followed him.

"How dare you carry tales to Sir John!" she exclaimed. "You, a dependant—for that's what you are—presume to interfere and try to set aside my orders—and Sir John's!"

"You are mistaken, Lady Lydia. I did not intentionally——"

"Be silent, sir; I will hear nothing. As you are afraid of a little night cold for yourself and Simmons, you may go and share his hearth



with him this evening; you don't dine in my presence. One of us must be absent from the table, you or I."

"Very well, Lady Lydia. I will not intrude upon you."

He made straight for the hall door and went out, really with no fixed intention, but in the moment's vexation. Even he, sweet-tempered though he was, submissive as he had been trained to be, could feel anger at times, when the injustice heaped upon him was unusually great. In a few moments he encountered a footman and recognised him as one of the servants at the Hall.

"What is it, Mark?"

"A note from Mrs. Orde, sir. My master is unable to come out this evening. They are very sorry it should have happened."

"Are none of them coming?"

"No, sir; they intend to dine quietly at home," was the man's reply as he went on with the note.

"I'll go and ask them to give me some dinner," quoth Tom to himself, his blue eyes breaking into an amused smile. "All happens for the best."

Sir John Clavering had been a soldier, and worked his way upwards to fame and fortune. At a comparatively early age he returned from India, his fortune made, a baronetcy bestowed upon him for services rendered there. We are writing of many, many years ago, when fortunes were more quickly made in India than they are now. Looking out for a place to settle in Sir John bought Beechhurst, and became a resident in the fairest of all the midland counties.

But no sooner had he taken up his abode there than his wife died. He had three sons: Ingram, Geoffrey, and Reginald. The two elder had no profession; Ingram was the heir, Geoffrey made himself useful on the estate, Reginald entered the army. The first to marry was the youngest, Reginald, and his wife was the Lady Lydia Riley, the proud and portionless daughter of a poor Irish peer. The second to marry was Geoff, some three years afterwards, but it was a very different sort of marriage from his brother's, and the whole family set their faces against it and against him. He had married the daughter of an obscure farmer; and though he continued to overlook the estate, he was regarded as an alien. The only one who countenanced him at all was Sir John, who apportioned him a cottage on the estate to live in, and agreed to allow him a salary for his services.

So Geoffrey Clavering left Beechhurst, but before the twelvemonth was over he was back again, a widower, and a dying man. His wife had died in giving birth to a son, and Geoffrey was dying of a gunshot wound, received accidentally when out with a shooting-party three or four months before. It had penetrated to the lungs; there had been some lasting injury, and Geoff was gradually dying.

"You had better come back to Beechhurst, Geoff," Sir John had said at the wife's funeral, which he attended with his eldest son. "You'll get taken care of at home, and now that the poor young

thing's gone—and, Geoff, my boy, I never disliked her—there's no one to do anything for you here."

Accordingly on the next day Geoffrey went home with his fortnight-old baby.

"Bless the child!" exclaimed Sir John. "I forgot him. Well, the women servants must attend to him; there's plenty of 'em about. What's his name, Geoff?"

"Tom," replied Geoff. "Lucy was anxious about it before she died, and I had it done."

"Thomas, you mean, I suppose," said Sir John.

"No, I mean Tom," returned Geoff. "It was done in a hurry one night, you see, in her room, and when the parson asked me what name, I said 'Tom,' and Tom he was called. I didn't notice the mistake until afterwards. It won't matter, father; Tom's as good a name as any other."

"No, it won't matter," said Sir John. "What does he live upon, Geoff?"

"Barley-water and milk," answered Geoff; "so he won't cost much."

Geoffrey Clavering died, leaving the child at Beechhurst as a legacy. Soon after that Lady Lydia and her three young children arrived on a long visit, Reginald having gone on foreign service. Nothing could exceed Lady Lydia's astonishment at finding a baby at Beechhurst. She resented it in secret as a personal affront, an innovation on the rights of her own children, and could she have decently consigned the child to the workhouse, would assuredly have done so. Her temporary visit grew into a permanent one. Sir John, easy and good-natured, was glad to have his absent son's wife and children there, and it is probable that he felt the benefit of Lady Lydia's management, for Beechhurst had become full of discomfort for want of a mistress. However it may have been, she remained, and ruled the household as though she had been its own lawful mistress. Sir John insensibly yielded to her sway, and she might have boasted that she could turn him round her little finger. It was she who kept down Tom Clavering. He had been reared as a dependant, not as a son, had been taught to look upon himself as an interloper who was kept there out of charity, but must never be regarded as one of the family. Sir John insensibly fell into the snare, the neighbourhood fell into it, Tom himself fell into it. He was kept at school as much as possible, and in the holidays had to submit to constant slight and neglect. Thus Tom learnt the lesson of humility.

Lady Lydia might have taught it him more completely still, might have banished him for ever, but that one fact prevented her from going too far. Tom Clavering was connected with Squire Orde of the Hall, their nearest neighbour, and Sir John's very good friend. Squire Orde, when a young man, had married the eldest daughter of that same obscure farmer, the sister of her who subsequently became

Geoffrey Clavering's wife; consequently Tom was his nephew by marriage. Mrs. Orde had died early, as her sister had died, and when the Squire made a second and more suitable marriage, he grew to be ashamed of that first foolish mistake. But he could not quite ignore Tom's relationship, and the boy fell into a habit of running in and out at will, and making himself at home at the Hall. The second Mrs. Orde liked him, did not object to seeing her little daughter, the Squire's only child, make him her favourite playfellow. But now, when the years had gone on and Tom had grown into as attractive a young man as could be seen on a summer's day, Mrs. Orde's fears had taken alarm. Possibly they had been craftily awakened by Lady Lydia, for we rarely discover these things for ourselves. Millicent Orde and her fifty thousand pounds would be a rare prize for Tom Clavering, the dependant, but a prize that he was not going to secure. Lady Lydia had views of her own in the matter, and so had her eldest son; her fashionable, spendthrift son, Captain Jarvis Clavering.

It should have been mentioned that other changes had come to Beechhurst. Sir John's eldest son had married a wealthy heiress. She bore him two sons, twins, and when in later years these two young lads were left orphans, they also came home to Beechhurst to the guardianship of Lady Lydia and Sir John, the elder being heir to the title and estate. Major Clavering had also fallen in India, and Lady Lydia was a widow. It made no difference to her; she was neither poorer nor richer for it; but it seemed to establish her more firmly, if that were possible, at Beechhurst, for she had no other home now in the wide world, or any chance of one. Thus, though Sir John's sons were dead, their children all found a home at Beechhurst, either permanently or occasionally. Lady Lydia had had a fight—and it was not yet over—for the perpetual banishment of Tom when he left school, but Sir John, for once, was obstinate. He kept him at home, and made him overlooker of the estate. There was no one so fit for it, he said to Lady Lydia. See how he had been robbed and imposed upon since poor Geoff died. Tom would do as well as Geoff had done, for he had his head the right way on his shoulders. Lady Lydia had to submit for a time. For a time only, she whispered to herself. Ere long he should be sent adrift. In vain she begged and implored her own two sons in secret, first one and then the other, to take on himself the office of overlooker. Jarvis simply stroked his black moustache in astonished superciliousness. He an overlooker, a mere bailiff! Reginald replied that he knew nothing about land and its management, and that his tastes lay in quite a different line of life.

And so the years had gone on. But that things were nearing a crisis in more ways than one was undoubted. Captain Jarvis Clavering was getting into deep water—was in it, indeed—and there appeared to be no way of extrication but by some grand *coup-de-main*

—such as espousing a wealthy heiress. The heiress was at hand, and a very charming and lovable heiress too; and Captain Clavering made no end of visits to Beechhurst on her account. But he did not seem to make way with her; and a horrible fear had recently fallen upon Lady Lydia that she loved the poor scapegoat—the name they had given him for years past—Tom Clavering, the dependant.

And now let us go on. Tom, laughing at the turn affairs had taken that evening, strode on. He knew, if no one else did, that Lady Lydia's chief motive for wishing to banish him from the dinner-table was because Millicent Orde would be there. He knew that the bitter tone, which had characterised her recent manner towards him, arose from her fear as to Millicent. That he loved Millicent with his whole soul, Tom Clavering's beating heart told him only too well. What was to be its ending? He knew not. He only knew that he might just as well attempt to aspire to a royal princess as to the Squire's daughter.

When Mr. Orde had found in the afternoon that he grew no better, dinner was prepared at home, his wife and daughter declining to leave him. They were going into the dining-room—Mr. Orde with them—when Tom Clavering entered. Every one looked surprised: Millicent blushed scarlet.

"Will you give me some dinner, sir?"

"If you want it," returned the Squire. "And welcome. Anything the matter at Beechhurst?"

"I have offended Lady Lydia—no unusual thing—and she forbade my sitting down with them. I thought, as it was Christmas Day, perhaps you'd take me in."

He spoke in half-jesting, half-serious tone. A servant placed a chair for him next to Millicent. Two maiden ladies, cheerful and talkative, sat opposite—old friends that Mrs. Orde had hastily sent for when she found they were going to take their Christmas dinner at home.

Squire Orde, who had only come into the dining-room to carve, protesting he could touch nothing, ventured at length on a little turkey, and then helped himself to a larger slice. His aching head seemed to grow better as by magic, and he soon felt as well as he had ever felt in his life. These impromptu meetings are often pleasanter than premeditated ones. It was the case here. You remember the remark of the old Vicar of Wakefield in reference to their last recorded festive meeting—"I don't know whether we had more wit amongst us than usual, but we had certainly more laughter." The laughter at the Squire's table that night was abundant. Every face was happy, every heart at rest; it was one of the merriest evenings spent that day within the three kingdoms; and a night they all long remembered.

"What are you thinking about, Millicent?" asked the Squire of

his daughter, when their guests had finally departed, and the bed-candles were being lighted.

Millicent woke out of her reverie with a start. "Papa, I was thinking how very happy we have been to-night, and wondering if anything in life could ever look cloudy again."

## CHAPTER II.

### CAPTAIN CLAVERING TRIUMPHANT.

ONLY eight days after, on New Year's Day, the reception rooms of Squire Orde were ablaze with light. It was his custom to give a dinner party on the first day of the new year, twenty-four guests being generally invited, as many as his dining-room could comfortably hold. On this occasion there were only twenty-two—two of the expected guests not having made their appearance—Tom Clavering and Sir John. The latter, feeling ill, had sent his apology by his family, all of whom were there; for Tom little excuse was made, he was too insignificant to waste words upon. Captain Clavering, stroking his handsome moustache, made a supercilious remark in Millicent's hearing, to the effect that Sir John found Tom could be no longer tolerated—and that was all. Millicent listened with a bright eye and a smiling face, but her heart within her sank with disappointment.

They dined at seven, and it was nearly nine before the ladies left the dining-room. Millicent went last, following her mother. Captain Clavering whispered something in her ear as she passed, for it was he who bowed them out. She laughed in response—a sufficiently light laugh to listening ears. But her step grew slow as the door closed, and she lingered behind the rest. A maid glided up as she was about to enter the drawing-room and put a folded slip of paper into her hand.

"Mr. Tom Clavering is outside, miss, and asked if I could give you this without being seen by the visitors."

"I am going away, Millicent; probably for years, possibly for ever. Will you come out to me for one minute? I am at the grove gate.

"T. C."

She stood beneath the light of the hall lamp, her brain confused, her heart beating with its wild pain. Then she caught up a woollen shawl and ran out at the hall door. The grove gate was only across the lawn. It was a starlight night, cold and frosty; but she did not at once discern any one, for the overhanging trees just there were dark and heavy.

He was leaning on the gate, but stepped forward as she advanced. Involuntarily, in her deep agitation, she put out both her hands: he clasped and held them fondly to him, his agitation great as her own.

In these moments of agony—it was nothing less—the mind is for the most part in a state of bewilderment. It was so with Millicent Orde, and only a confused impression remained to her afterwards of the interview, and what was said. Perhaps the fault was partially Tom Clavering's, who was less clear and concise than usual, in his angry excitement. Those who had been always against him had done their work at last, he said; had ruined him with Sir John, and he was being sent away, Heaven knew where! certainly with little prospect of ever being allowed to return.

She leaned against the gate for support; would have pardoned him had he taken her in his arms and strained her to his bosom. But Tom Clavering was of an honourable nature, and dared not do this in his chivalry. Many and many a time had words of love rashly trembled on his lips; if he had then restrained them, how much more needful that he should do so now! Even his own poor humble position in Sir John's household was taken from him at last, and he was being sent into the world to work for his living. The inconsistency and folly of attempting to aspire to Millicent Orde was more palpably present to him that night than it had ever been before.

"But what have you done?" she gasped. "Why are they sending you away?"

"You will hear no end of charges against me," he replied; "and I don't know that it's of much use asking you to disbelieve them. I was always the scapegoat, you know, and shall be so to the end. I can no longer battle against the stream—and if I could, what end would it answer? Think of me in as kindly a way as you can, Millicent."

Her tears were falling.

"Only tell me, Tom, that you have done no wrong!" she whispered, her mind confused by fears of she knew not what.

"If I have, they have goaded me to it," was his answer, spoken solely in the moment's reckless irritation, for he attached no special meaning to her words, nor suspected that she conveyed any. "God bless you and be with you always, Millicent! I can't stay, and I ought not to keep you out here; but it was not possible to leave without seeing you!"

"Are we to part—like this?" she wailed in anguish.

"Millicent, my darling, don't tempt me! Do you not know what it is costing me to part like this—to stand here and tell you quietly that I am going away? Have you not known for some time past that if I had dared—— But I must not go on; another moment, and the temptation to speak will be greater than I can withstand. Circumstances throw a wide barrier between us, and I may not presume to pass it. If there were only the least prospect of my achieving a position I might say to you 'I will hope,' without forfeiting all honour; but there is none, and I do not say it."

She put out her trembling hands once more, lifted her streaming



eyes to his. The temptation was too great, and Tom Clavering bent his face to hers.

"A cousinly kiss, Millicent," he murmured. "We used to call ourselves cousins in sport when we were children. Surely none would grudge it us now that we are parting. I shall not return until all danger's over."

"Danger?" she breathed.

"Danger that the scapegoat might forget himself by speaking of his love. When you are the wife of a more lucky man than I, I may return, Millicent. Never before; no, not though even Beechhurst sent for me."

"You give me up for ever, then?" She spoke in the pain and irritation the words undoubtedly wrought in her.

"I have no other resource. My parting blessing be with you, Millicent!"

She snatched her hands away with an angry gesture, and sped over the lawn, one bitter sob breaking from her lips. A few minutes alone in her own chamber, and then she was in the drawing-room again, apparently the gayest of the gay, whirling in a mazy waltz with Captain Clavering.

Tom Clavering's departure excited a few comments from the neighbourhood in general, but they soon died away again. The precise cause of his banishment could not be ascertained, even by Millicent. The truth of the matter was, that it had been brought about by Lady Lydia, and, as you may readily imagine, it was not by any means Lady Lydia's intention that this should be proclaimed. In the week intervening between Christmas and New Year's Day things had been most uncomfortable at Beechhurst. Lady Lydia was determined that Tom Clavering should be banished, and devoted her whole energies, her undoubted influence, to the task. Petty charges were brought against him, trifles were magnified into great offences by the manner in which they were told to Sir John, and in which there might be a grain of truth. Graver charges, which could never have been substantiated, but which he was not allowed the opportunity to refute, were whispered in Sir John's ear. Tom was stung into retaliation. He was insolent to Lady Lydia; he retorted on Jarvis Clavering; he dared to take a high tone with his grandfather. The lion within him had been aroused at last; the patient bearing of years gave way before a moment's passion. Lady Lydia had been taking her measures quietly, making arrangements in secret; when they were completed, she pointed out to Sir John how he could go and whither, and then Beechhurst would have peace. Whether Sir John would have consented must remain a doubt, but the climax was destined to be brought about, unintentionally, by Captain Clavering.

On the afternoon of New Year's Day, that gentleman was unwise enough, during Tom's stormy anger, to venture on a word of insult, spoken in his ordinary cool, supercilious, condescending manner, and



Tom knocked the gallant officer down. Sir John, in his turn, was aroused, and vowed that Tom, the scapegoat, should be out of Beechhurst before he went to rest that night. And that very night Tom left. But nothing of all this came out to the world, and cunning hints and innuendoes imparted a notion that Tom had been guilty of some crime too bad to be discussed, and which for the sake of the name he bore had to be hushed up. How near they were to the mark, few guessed.

At the time of the occurrence, none felt more surprise than Squire Orde. In his secret heart the Squire liked Tom Claverling; but it must in candour be added that he had not the remotest suspicion of any attachment existing between him and his daughter. He went over to Beechhurst on the morning after Tom's departure, and came back with a scowl upon his brow.

"What have you learnt? What has led to the dismissal?" inquired Mrs. Orde of her husband with all a woman's curiosity, putting the very questions Millicent dared not ask.

"I can't come to the bottom of what led to his dismissal; they don't seem inclined to speak out frankly. It was general misconduct, I fancy; petty ill-doings, one after another. Lady Lydia says no one can form an idea of what they have had to put up with, and how forbearing they have been. But"—and the Squire's tones fell to something like fear—"whatever his minor offences, he need not have capped them with a crime."

Millicent's trembling lips parted.

"A crime!" echoed Mrs. Orde.

"He went off with a bag of money belonging to Sir John. Stole it from the *escritoire*."

"He never did!" burst forth Millicent.

The Squire turned his eyes upon her.

"Why are you so affected, child? It does not concern you. I exclaimed just as you have done, until I heard the facts. But, mark you, though Sir John disclosed them to me—I'm Tom's relative, and that makes a difference—they are not to be made known to other people. Not a hint of it must be breathed abroad. Lady Lydia, incensed as she is against Tom, begged me to bury it in silence, and scared enough she looked over it. As though I should speak of it! The disgrace would tell upon the Ordes almost as much as on the Claverings."

The facts appeared to be these.

On the afternoon of the new year, which fell upon a Saturday, Sir John, terribly upset with the disturbance, was sitting in a little room, which he called his sanctum, on the ground floor, where he transacted any business that might arise. He had not been himself for some days, the agitation had made him feel ill, and he would not attempt to keep his dinner engagements at the Hall.

Whilst he sat there, a small tenant-farmer called to pay a half-year's

rent. It had been due at Michaelmas, but the man was, or said he was, unable to bring it before. Sir John, always a considerate landlord, accepted the apology with good nature, and contrived to write the receipt. The amount, forty-five pounds, in gold and notes, was in a canvas bag. The farmer declined refreshment and departed in a hurry, saying he would call for the bag in a day or two, and would accept a glass then.

It was dusk, but the room was bright with firelight; and presently Sir John rose from his chair, took the bag, and walked with his usual difficulty to the *escritoire*—a high upright desk, in which he kept his papers. At that moment Tom Clavering came in, and Sir John, either in agitation at the sight of him, or by accident, dropped the key. Tom stepped forward and picked it up—for his grandfather could not stoop without difficulty—and Sir John put it in the *escritoire*, turned the key, but left it in the lock. Tom had come to apologize for the heat he had shown to his grandfather an hour before, but Sir John refused to hear him, and to avoid discussion, went out of the room in anger, leaving Tom in it.

As Sir John was turning into the dining-room a servant came up and said that Cole, the farrier, was in the kitchen, and craved a minute's speech of him. Sir John, vexed and put out, answered that he could not then see Cole, but the man might call again later in the evening. In less than five minutes Sir John was back in the little room: it was empty, the door was shut, and everything apparently was undisturbed. Remembering that he had left the key in the *escritoire*, he went up and took it out before sitting down.

It was rather a remarkable coincidence that Sir John did not again leave the room, but shut himself up in it for the evening. He took nothing but a basin of soup for dinner, and that was brought to him—the family, remember, were dining at the Hall. Between seven and eight he saw Tom Clavering for a few minutes, coldly gave him some concise instructions, shook hands with him by way of farewell, and hoped he would behave better where he was going than he had latterly done at Beechhurst.

Between eight and nine, Cole, the farrier, came again, and was admitted. Cole's business was to beg the loan of a prescription for some horse medicine, of which Sir John had spoken to him some days before. Sir John went at once to the *escritoire* to get it, asking the man to hold the light.

The first thing that struck him on opening the lid, was that the bag of money was gone. In his amazement he spoke words which disclosed all to the farrier—the circumstances of the loss and the amount. Even as Sir John spoke, the thought flashed across him that it could only have been taken by Tom; and in his horror and fear lest such a disgrace on the name of Clavering should be published, he first of all enjoined the man to silence, and then strove to smooth over the matter by saying it was very possible the bag was not lost, but had been

removed to the safer quarters of his own room upstairs. Cole, a keen man, took his cue, and affected to believe that his honour would find it there. Such was the story told to Squire Orde after church on the following day, Sunday.

"And you think Tom took it?" exclaimed Mr. Orde.

"What else can I think?" retorted Sir John. "No one else could have taken it. For the few minutes that I stood in the dining-room, the door was wide open, and no one could pass to the other room unseen by me. Besides, who would do such a thing? I have no thieves in my household."

"Tom is at Bristol, you say?"

"He is gone to Bristol to await orders. Lydia, it seems, has foreseen this for some time—she is farther-sighted than I—has been interesting herself with her friends in Ireland to get him the management of some land there, and expects a letter by every post with final instructions. They want him to take over some agricultural implements."

But Mr. Orde had a conscience as well as a heart. In spite of the evidence bearing in many ways against Tom, he could not forget that he was the nephew of his dead wife. And when on the following morning a letter was delivered to him from Tom; a very proper and sensible letter, wishing him farewell and stating that the Hall being full of guests on New Year's night was his reason for not making it in person; Mr. Orde suddenly determined to go to Bristol and see him. So he sent a servant to direct the Bristol mail to take him up that night at midnight when it passed, as it had taken up Tom two nights before.

He saw Tom; listened to his version of matters; heard what his treatment at Beechhurst had been for some time, more especially in the past week; and Mr. Orde came to the conclusion that Tom was more sinned against than sinning. But he considered that some worldly experience would be of use to him, and urged him not to kick against the Irish proposal, but to do his best in it. Things might brighten in time: they generally did by dint of patience and perseverance. Tom replied that he had no intention of kicking. He had been turned adrift, and it was Hobson's choice—to go there or starve.

"By the way," cried the Squire, speaking in careless tones, "there has been a loss at Beechhurst since you left, or rather the evening you were leaving. A bag of money—forty-five pounds, I believe—that Sir John put into his escritoire, disappeared mysteriously."

"Was it the bag I saw him put in?" cried Tom raising his honest eyes fearlessly to the Squire's face. "How very strange! It can't possibly be lost."

"Yes, I believe it was that same bag. Sir John said something about your having been present when he locked it up. It seems he

left the key in the lock, and was absent from the room about five minutes; not more. During that time the bag disappeared."

"Who went into the room?"

"There it is! No one went in, so far as Sir John can tell. He was in the dining-room during those few minutes, with the door open, and felt certain that no one passed into his sanctum."

A sudden light, as of awakened remembrance, shone in Tom Clavering's eyes.

"Why," he exclaimed, "I saw——" And there he stopped.

"Saw what?" asked the Squire.

But Tom Clavering did not respond. He sat down, evidently in deep and earnest thought, and began pushing the wavy flaxen hair from his temples—a habit of his when troubled.

"What did you see?" repeated Mr. Orde.

"No," said Tom, "I'll say no more. The fact is I thought I remembered seeing someone go into the room; but perhaps—perhaps I was mistaken. I daresay I was mistaken."

"You ought to say. The money was stolen."

"I never will, sir. I wouldn't say it even if I were certain. Let them fight out their own battles."

"And suppose they were to suspect you of taking it?"

Tom burst into a laugh.

"Suspect me of stealing money! Not they. Sir John knows me better. They all do."

"Suppose they were to accuse you?"

"I don't think I should speak, even if they did. I would rather do an enemy a good turn than a bad one. It all comes home to us, sir, some time or other. I feel sure that for every injury, however trifling, a man or woman designedly inflicts on others, it comes back to them with interest. I have noticed it scores of times."

"Tom did not take that money, Clavering," observed the Squire when he got back home again.

"No, that he did not," was the somewhat unexpected but emphatic answer. "I was enraged against him at the time, or I should never have said it, and I'm sure I never thought it. Poor Geoff was the soul of honour, and Tom takes after him. There, let the dross go; I shan't make a stir about it."

"Are you ill?" asked the Squire, noticing a certain irritability in Sir John's tones, a careworn look in his eyes.

"I don't know. I miss Tom. Things all go wrong without him. He was my right hand, Orde. I didn't value him when he was here; but now I look round for him every hour of the day and he is not there."

"Have him back again," said the Squire.

"Not just yet; Lady Lydia would say I did it to affront her. He was insolent to her; there's no denying it."

"A spell of Ireland will do him good," remarked the Squire

soothingly. "It will give him an experience of the world he would never learn at Beechhurst; and a dose of roughing it is always serviceable to young men. In regard to that money——"

"Hang the money," roared the old man. "I won't hear any more about the money. But for saying he had helped himself to it—and a fool I was for my pains—I should never have let him go when it came to the last."

"I was only about to say," quietly persisted the Squire, "that some one might have come in at the window and taken it. It opens to the ground, you know, and you have a habit of sitting there after dark with unclosed shutters. Were they unclosed at the time?"

"Of course they were," irritably returned Sir John. "It was scarcely dark, and lights hadn't been brought in. Let it go, I say, Orde."

"Then you still intend not to stir in it?"

"Orde, you'll drive me mad. Stir in it to have Tom slandered! I know he didn't touch it; but every one else would say he did. I wish the money had been at the bottom of the sea before Parker brought it here that afternoon."

Lady Lydia met Squire Orde as he was going out. "How Sir John seems to feel Tom's absence," he innocently remarked—but the Squire was one who could never see an inch beyond his nose. "He wants him back again."

Every drop of blood in Lady Lydia's veins seemed to stand still as she listened. Want him back again! after all her trouble, all her plotting and planning. But she was a thorough diplomatist; and she smiled on the Squire as he stood before her.

"A great deal better for us all that he should be away, Mr. Orde. Better for me, better for you, especially better for your daughter. Rely upon it, all things happen for the best."

"What difference does it make to my daughter?" cried the Squire, opening his eyes very wide at the words.

"Ah—but perhaps I ought not to tell tales out of school," smiled Lady Lydia. "He was a presuming, designing villain; he dared to fall in love with Millicent, and to make little secret of it; he cherished the hope of making her his wife; yes, Squire, even he, Mr. Tom Clavering."

The Squire's eyes dilated; the Squire's hair rose up on end with horror. "He, penniless, obscure Tom Clavering, make up to Miss Orde—to my daughter."

"There's not a doubt about it, Squire; secretly if not openly. It is good for us all that he should be away."

The Squire acquiesced with his whole heart, and with a few strong words into the bargain. He would have moved Heaven and earth after that to keep Tom Clavering away from Beechhurst. He began to see that he was a scapegoat and nothing else; began to think it

very likely he had taken the money, and all the enormities of which Tom was accused found more than a willing echo in his mind. So prone is human nature to be swayed by self-interest !

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SNOWSTORM.

It was twelve months later, and the London and Worcester mail was making its slow way amidst difficulties. Snow was falling heavily—snow had been falling, more or less, for three days. The coach was unusually laden ; though it was the mail, and carried his Majesty's letters, it was not for that reason exempt from parcels : and it was crammed with London presents for the country suited to the season. Baskets of cod-fish, barrels of oysters, hampers of wine, passengers' luggage—never had the Worcester mail been more heavily charged.

Slower and slower yet went the horses. The coachman, half-blinded by the drifting storm, alternately coaxed and whipped them. The guard rose constantly in his seat behind, looked out on the white mist, and now and then put his horn to his mouth and blew a blast. To what end ? It only went echoing away into the lone country over the white snow.

The horses came to a standstill, and the coachman turned his head to speak.

"Light your lantern, Jim, and come and see whether I be on the road or off it."

The guard got down with his lighted lantern, and sank at once up to the knees in snow. It was impossible to tell whether they were on the road or not. The poor horses, panting and labouring, tossed their heads to the reins, and tried to shake themselves free ; but the leaders would not go forward of their own accord, and to urge them on might mean death.

"It ain't of no use, Jim," spoke the driver from the depths of his many-folded comforter. "We can't go on."

The window on the right was suddenly let down, and a gentleman's head, enveloped in a purple silk handkerchief, was thrust out.

"What's the matter ?"

"We can't get on, sir," replied the guard, treading his way to the window.

"Not get on ?"

"The snow apparently have been very heavy here, sir, and the horses can't make their way in it. It's coming down as thick as ever I saw it, getting worse with every minute."

The startling news aroused all the inside passengers, of whom there were four—three gentlemen and a lady. As many of the four



heads as could appear at the windows came out, their expressions showing various phases of consternation.

"We must get on, guard!" cried a voice of authority. And the speaker was Squire Orde.

"Can't see how it's to be done, sir," civilly returned the man. "The leaders won't move of their own accord, and we don't know whether we're on the road or off the road."

"But we absolutely *must* get on. To-morrow is Christmas Eve. And I—I have engagements that I cannot put off," pursued Squire Orde.

"To-day's Christmas Eve, sir," corrected the guard; "morning have been in some time. But we can't get on, sir, any the more for that."

"Where are we?" was heard from a passenger who was unable to get his head out.

"Not such a great sight off Chipping Norton," was the lucid answer. "Half-way, maybe. Wish we had stopped at Woodstock! The ostler said it would be a wonder if we got on."

"What is to be done, coachman?" roared the questioner. "What is to be done?"

"Nothing—so far as he see," was the coachman's equable reply. "If he tried to force the animals on, it might result in an upset down a precipice, and cost 'em their lives."

An effort was attempted. The guard and one of the passengers went to the heads of the leaders, and for a short time and with great caution way was made. But they appeared to be getting deeper into the snow; the coachman's decided opinion was that they had lost the road, and there seemed to be nothing for it but to wait until daylight. None of the passengers ever forgot that night; it is still spoken of in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire.

When day dawned it was found that the coachman's fear was correct. They were off the road; and how they had reached the place where they found themselves without accident, was a marvel. Snow fell incessantly; getting on was out of the question; but by dint of exertion and perseverance they managed to reach a lone farmhouse, and there man and beast obtained the most welcome rest and shelter they had any of them ever enjoyed.

I must beg you to note the days—for there was a singular romance attached to this detention of the mail and its passengers. This was Christmas Eve, Saturday; Christmas Day that year falling on Sunday. Of all the passengers, the one showing most irritation at the delay was Squire Orde; he had urgent business awaiting him, he said, in Worcestershire. Very true; but had the business involved life or death, he could not any the more contend with the elements that were against him. He had been to London on matters concerning the settling of property on his daughter's marriage; and in the breast pocket of his coat bore the wedding licence. On the following



Tuesday, the day but one after Christmas Day, she was to become the wife of Captain Jarvis Clavering.

All Saturday, Sunday, and Monday were the prisoners detained. Squire Orde bore it badly. The only lady of the party, merry and cheerful-hearted herself, laughed at him good-humouredly, saying that the adventure was agreeable rather than otherwise, and would serve them as conversation for the remainder of their lives. Mr. Orde at length disclosed the reason of his impatience to his fellow-prisoners: his daughter could not be married without him. They allowed the plea, but were unable to speed him on. It happened that all the passengers were not in any way connected with each other. The farmer feasted them right royally with his turkeys on Christmas Day, and on the Monday they sat round the fire and played at cards. So prolonged and heavy a snow-storm had not been known in the country for many years.

Tuesday morning. Squire Orde was the first to look anxiously out at the door. It was the wedding day—or ought to have been—and he was nearly beside himself. He chafed, fretted and fumed; all to no purpose. What mattered that the storm was abating; the weather giving signs of breaking up. Had the roads been rendered at once clear as a bowling-green he could not have reached home in time.

And now Mr. Orde's patience was destined to receive the final blow. By night—Tuesday night—the main road became traversable for coaches. The mail that left London that evening passed on its way, and reached Worcester in the morning; but ill-fated Mr. Orde's mail was still a prisoner. The half-mile necessary to get from the farmer's house to the main road was as yet impassable.

And at the Hall? Things were no better there. Of late, indeed, they had not been very bright at any time, for Millicent Orde had unaccountably lost her health and spirits, although on the eve of marriage. For ten long months, up to the previous November, had she held out against Captain Clavering and his fascinations; but she succumbed at last in very weariness. Captain Clavering had passed the year at Beechhurst. In January he had proposed to Squire Orde for Millicent; and Millicent had rejected him. This was followed by his selling out of the army. Lady Lydia regretted it at the Hall, this selling out, with tears in her eyes; but young men would be young men, she observed, and his love for dear Millicent was such that he could not live away from her. To be near her he filled Tom Clavering's place at Beechhurst, managing the estate for Sir John, who was visibly ageing day by day; and making himself so great a favourite with that old man, so altogether indispensable, that—Lady Lydia whispered the news—all the unentailed property, no inconsiderable amount, Sir John had resolved to bequeath to him.

He was a good-looking man—popular in the county, and he made the most of his attractions. Squire Orde had looked coolly on his

proposals at first ; fashion, good looks, good family, irreproachable name (and, for all the Squire or any one else suspected, the Captain's was irreproachable), devoted love, though good things in their way, do not entirely compensate for want of money, and it was well known that Captain Clavering had not very much. Still, if Millicent made up her mind to have him, the Squire would not say nay—his daughter had plenty of her own. And so the year had gone on—the Captain ever near her ; but so kind and gentle were his attentions, so unobtrusive his claims, that she felt half ashamed even tacitly to show that she rejected him. And then stepped in Lady Lydia with her whisper of Sir John's intentions ; and the Squire and Mrs. Orde were converted from passive spectators into active partisans.

Of Tom Clavering nothing had been heard. He was supposed to be in some remote Irish bog, working out his sins. Beechhurst never spoke of him. Its head, perhaps, dared not ; even Squire Orde had been converted into an enemy, and would not hear a word of regret for him—stopped his ears if Sir John ever ventured on one. But it was hardly right of the Squire to allow his daughter to think Tom's ill-doings had been proved against him, including that theft of the farmer's half-year's rent. Self-interest blinds us to the right, and Mr. Orde was very nearly incurring a lifelong punishment as a reward for his deceit. Millicent had fought against the conviction as long as she could ; but Lady Lydia was at hand, and there was ever some little whispered proof, incidentally mentioned, to testify to his baseness. In November—constant dropping will wear away a stone—she yielded to her fate, and accepted Captain Clavering. Accepted him listlessly, her conscience the while convicting her of sin ; for down deep in her heart lingered the image of that scapegoat, Tom Clavering ; and in spite of her prayers, tears, and strivings, she could not thrust him forth. "I may be able to forget him when once I am married," she said to herself over and over again, "and—as good marry Jarvis Clavering as any other." Sir John was delighted, he had always liked Millicent, and the match was hurried on by Lady Lydia and her son.

It was arranged for the Tuesday after Christmas Day, and the Hall, as might be expected, was in commotion—a commotion not lessened by the unexpected and unexplained absence of its master. Alarm subsided when it became known that the London coaches, including the mail, had not been able to reach Worcester, from the quantity of snow which had fallen. Reports came of "mountains" of snow in the low-lying lands around Moreton-in-the-Marsh.

To Millicent it seemed a miserable Christmas Day. She and her mother dined at home, Captain Clavering their only visitor. The two lady guests of the previous year could not reach them on account of the snow. There was no dinner company at Beechhurst—Sir John had had a slight attack, some sort of seizure, and was in bed, the house being kept quiet. Millicent felt wretched ; try as she

would, she was unable to rally her spirits ; a weight, as of impending evil, was upon her ; and had the coming Tuesday been about to dawn to witness her hanging instead of her wedding, she could not have looked forward to it in a more gloomy spirit. She recalled the happiness of the last Christmas, and a deep sigh burst from her lips at the contrast between that day and this. *Then* she had wondered whether things could ever look cloudy again ; *now* the secret cry of her heart was—could they ever again look bright ? But should not experience have taught her a lesson ? As that unclouded brilliance had all too soon faded into the darkness of night—might not the present darkness also turn to daylight and sunshine ?

When Monday came and did not bring Mr. Orde, the Hall was in consternation. Captain Clavering protested against the marriage being delayed, even though Tuesday should not bring the Squire, but Mrs. Orde replied that there was no marriage licence, the Squire was bringing it with him. Early on Tuesday morning, while it was yet dark, Captain Clavering rode into Worcester, and was back again at ten with a licence. He found some of the wedding-guests assembled at the Hall ; to others within reach, Mrs. Orde had sent saying there would be no wedding that day. She had informed the rector.

"It is cruel," Captain Clavering said to Mrs. Orde—and his evident agitation seemed to speak volumes for his depth of love. "There is no impediment now ; and perhaps by the time we are in church Mr. Orde may be here, for the weather is breaking. *Don't* put off the wedding, it always brings ill-luck. Why is not Millicent dressed ?"

Mrs. Orde looked at her, seeming to ask—or so Millicent interpreted it—what should be her decision.

"No, no," she spoke—and in her accent there was a sound of fear—"not without papa ; I will not be married in this uncertainty. He may be ill, dying—we know not what may have happened."

Captain Clavering gave vent to an angry word, but recollecting himself on the instant he implored Millicent not to persist in her decision, and so invoke ill-luck upon their union. She shook her head and was very firm ; it almost seemed to the annoyed captain that she was glad of the respite. Lady Lydia Clavering came to the rescue ; not attacking the decision of Millicent, but of Mrs. Orde.

"Dear Lady Lydia, you ask an impossibility. I hinted to Captain Clavering yesterday that the settlements were not signed—cannot be until the arrival of Mr. Orde ; and now you force me to speak out. Were it Millicent's own wish that the ceremony should be solemnised I could not yield to it. She cannot marry before the completion of the settlements."

Mrs. Orde spoke decisively. She had of course right on her side, and there was nothing more to be said. It would only be the putting off the wedding for a day, every one agreed ; now that the weather was breaking, a few hours would no doubt bring the Squire. Captain Clavering had to submit, but he did it with a very bad grace.

Wednesday morning came, but did not bring with it Mr. Orde ; and this seemed the more astonishing from the fact that some of the delayed coaches had arrived. The Royal Mail especially, which left the "Bull and Mouth" only the previous night at its usual hour, came in without difficulty. But if Mr. Orde did not make his appearance, some one else did. One of the passengers by the mail—the mail which met with no delay and was only its usual allotted time doing the journey—went off at once to Beechhurst. Taking a glass of spirits and water at the "Star," in lieu of breakfast, which he was in too great a hurry to wait for, he chartered a gig and drove to Sir John's. And as soon as he arrived there he arrested Jarvis Clavering, gentleman and ex-captain.

It was for a very large sum, and it was of no use to fight against it. Fate is stronger than we are. The arrest was accomplished too publicly, and the news went about like wildfire. Sir John might have bailed him out had he been in a state to do it, but he was lying partially insensible. The heir, Bede Clavering, and his brother were not in the country. No one was at Beechhurst but Reginald, the barrister.

"*You* will give bail for me, Regie?" cried the crestfallen captain, who felt as though he would very much like to shoot somebody, perhaps himself.

"Couldn't take it," interposed the gruff voice of the capturer. "Couldn't take nobody's undertaking except Sir John's."

"Neither could I give it if he would, Jarvis," was Reginald's answer. "I am not in a position to take a debt upon me that might prove a lifelong incubus. I plod on, making a living by dint of hard work ; but I am just as poor as you are."

"It will put an end to my marriage," breathed Jarvis. "I have only looked to that to save me from the gulf. Those cursed roads ! But for Orde's delay I should now be safe. You might stretch a point for me, Reginald."

"I have shown you that I can't," returned the prudent brother. "Neither could I lend myself to such a fraud upon the Ordes. They ought to know the truth. If you were in this state of debt, how could you think of marrying?"

"Stop your cant !" cried the exasperated prisoner.

Deep was Squire Orde's astonishment when he reached home on the Wednesday night to have this little item of news whispered into his ear by his wife amidst the congratulations for his safety. Captain Clavering arrested, taken off a prisoner to London ! Captain Clavering, who, but for those snowdrifts, would now be his son-in-law ! Squire Orde turned hot and cold, and set himself to find out all he could learn.

What an escape ! The captain was in debt thick and threefold, and how he had managed to stave off the evil day so long was a mystery. The proceeds of his commission, which he was forced to

sell, had been a stop-gap for the time, and Lady Lydia had helped him all she could since. The indignant Squire found that his daughter's money was indeed needed, and, to crown the whole, the captain's antecedents did not show themselves free from tarnish on other matters.

"What an escape!" cried the Squire in solemn thankfulness. "And I—Heaven forgive me!—murmured rebelliously at that delay in the snowstorm, little thinking what it was doing for my child. Perhaps it was sent expressly to save her."

She—Millicent—was as one released from despair. Lightness came back to her step, roses to her cheeks. It seemed as though some special happiness had suddenly descended upon her from Heaven.

"She could not have liked him!" cried the wondering Squire.

"She did not," said Mrs. Orde. "She liked Tom Clavering too well ever to like Jasper." And the Squire gave a hideous frown at the unwelcome name.

More grief fell on Beechhurst in February; real and very awful grief. While Lady Lydia was praying her heart out for the restoration of Sir John—he was still lying incapable, unable to write, or very well to understand what he was wanted to write, and her son, the gallant captain, was in consequence not rescued from his miserable prison—news arrived of the death of the two brothers, Bede, the heir, and his brother Charley. They had been drowned in one of the Scottish lakes. A pleasure-party of ten set sail in the brightness of the early spring morning, and only two of them lived to land again. Bede and Charles Clavering were amidst the drowned.

Lady Lydia was as one stunned. Oh, if her best-beloved son, Jarvis, could but be there, to take, as it were, Bede's place with the old man, to establish himself firmly at Beechhurst! That horrible prison! Reginald had hastened down; but who was he?

"Send for him—send for him!" moaned Sir John, upon whom the unhappy news had struck as with a death-blow.

"I *can't* send for him," bewailed Lady Lydia, hot tears falling. "That is, it's of no use sending—he could not come. He is in the King's Bench, Sir John. I have told you so every day for these two months."

Sir John looked up with questioning eyes.

"Not he, not Jarvey," he said, when understanding dawned upon him; "I don't want him, my lady. I want my own boy—my heir, Tom!"

"Tom!" shrieked Lady Lydia. "*Tom* the heir! Tom!"

"Of course he is the heir, mother," put in Reginald. "And come he must. What are you thinking about? I wrote for him before I left London."

"He never shall come! He never shall be the heir!" returned my Lady Lydia, in a storm of passion. "I won't recognise him—I won't receive him at Beechhurst!"

Reginald Clavering wondered whether grief was turning his mother's brain.

"Tom is heir in the face of man and the country," he quietly said. "Exercise your common sense, mother. A few days—I see it in his face," he added, lowering his voice as he indicated Sir John—"and Tom will be, not heir, but master of Beechhurst."

She sank down in her low chair with a desperate cry. Was *this* to be the ending of it all? Had she schemed and plotted and toiled all these long years only for this? Even so. For once right had been stronger than might, and had come out triumphant.

The Squire and his daughter were sitting together at the Hall a few days afterwards, in the evening twilight, talking in subdued tones of the fresh trouble that had fallen on Beechhurst that day, when the sound of a visitor was heard in the hall. The Squire supposed it was Reginald, who often came in; but *her* ear was quicker, *her* ear had recognised the voice and footstep, and her heart beat as though it would burst its bounds.

"It's Reginald, I think," remarked the Squire, as a servant threw open the room door.

Not Reginald, nor any one so short and slight, but a tall commanding man, with the old sweet smile upon his fair Saxon face. The Squire peered at him, not recognising him in the gloaming, and then peered at the man who was showing him in.

"Sir Tom Clavering."

Aye, Sir Tom Clavering, master of Beechhurst. Reginald had been right in his fears, and poor stricken Sir John had passed away. That same day, before Tom's arrival, the bell had tolled for him.

"His last word was one of love for you, Tom," said the Squire. "I believe he never cared for any one as he cared for you, and I know that he made a will leaving everything to you."

Tom Clavering tried to speak, but his voice was husky.

"I wish I could have got here in time!" was all he said. "He did not love me more than I loved him."

"You are heir to all, Tom," continued the Squire, after a pause. "It is a great deal, an immense amount; the two poor lads were not of age, you know, and Sir John inherited. He often talked to me about making a codicil, and leaving legacies to different people, but he never did it—Lady Lydia and her children have nothing."

"I'll make it all right for them," said Tom, with his warm-hearted smile. "They shall still have their legacies. And what about myself, Squire?" he continued, the smile becoming broader. "Am I still looked upon as a wicked scapegoat, with no end of sins on my shoulders?"

The Squire's voice was rather subdued as he answered, his countenance somewhat crestfallen.

"Tom, I don't think that any one believed anything against you in their hearts, even Lady Lydia. Sir John would have had you home



again as soon as you left, had he dared. As to the bag of money that disappeared——”

“Never mind the money,” interrupted Sir Tom.

“I was going to say that I have now a very nasty suspicion about that,” persisted the Squire. “A day or two ago, in talking with Cole, the farrier, he hinted that he knew how it went; he had seen some one in the room that night, and he said that you knew of it, for he had written to Bristol to tell you. What do you know?”

“Never mind,” repeated Tom. “We will let bygones be bygones.”

“I suspect it was Jarvis Clavering. You may trust me, Tom; I shall be as careful of his reputation as you could be. Cole—he is a trusty man, too—says it *was* him. He saw him at the *escritoire* as he passed the window. Have you known it all along?”

“I have known that Captain Clavering was in the room. As Sir John went out at one door, I flung out at the glass doors, and came upon Jarvis Clavering looking in. He murmured some excuse, which I did not wait to hear, and passed into the room. Later, after I had seen you at Bristol, I received a letter from Cole, who must have been passing the window directly afterwards. It seems Cole took up a notion that I was suspected, and wrote to tell me he had seen some one else at the *escritoire*. I wrote back and silenced him. What did it matter? I knew that Sir John would not suspect me, nor would any one else I cared for. For the rest, my back was a tolerably broad one in those days; the appropriation of a little money on starting out to see the world, was only a trifling addition to its load.”

“How forgiving you are, Tom!”

“It is my nature to be so, sir; I take no credit for it. Let bygones be bygones in all ways,” he emphatically added, rising and grasping the Squire’s hand.

“Tom, we have never really known you—never valued you as we ought!”

“Then I hope you will value me all the more in the future,” answered Tom laughing. “May I see Millicent?” he pointedly added. “She ran away when I came in.”

“Go and look for her. Ah, how blind we have been. Tom, I hope you’ll forgive me! I worked against you with her just as much as the rest did.”

In the adjoining room, before the fire, on the hearthrug crouched Millicent. She started up as Tom Clavering came in, put up her hands in deprecation of his anger; felt faint with shame and repentance. He said not a syllable of reproach, but clasped her in his arms and held her to his heart.

“Oh, Tom, Tom!”

“Hush, child! I will not let you breathe a word of excuse to me, or I know how it all was. The battle against you waged fiercely; you



held out as long as your strength allowed, and then yielded in very weariness. It is all over now, my darling, and I am here to claim and protect you—now and for evermore.”

As she lay peacefully on his breast, crying happy tears, the remembrance of the recent Christmas Day, covered with darkness as with a pall, flashed over her, and her whole spirit went up in thankfulness to Heaven. How soon it had become light again!

Aye, dark days have dawned for many of us, and will dawn again. Days, when we look into the far corners of the earth for a gleam of comfort, and look in vain; no ray in the sunless sky, no star in the blackness of night. But above this dreary earth, higher than that gloomy sky, is Heaven. *There* sits One who sees our cares, hears our sighs, pities our tears; and who will surely, in His own good time, turn our darkness into light. At all times, and in all seasons, let us ever trust in Him!

---

### NOT YET THE LIGHT.

Nor yet, nor here, for here we seek in vain  
To pierce the gloom that all enshrouds our way,  
And find that light which maketh perfect day.  
Some meteor flashes swift along the main,  
Then sinks and dies, and all is dark again.  
Light—give us light! But still no sign of dawn,  
No Eastern glimmer yet proclaims the morn—  
Chaos and utter blackness still remain.

No man may see the Dawn till he have passed  
Through the dark hour of strange, mysterious sleep,  
When Death, the silent rower, takes him fast  
His dreadful journey o'er the unknown deep.  
He sinks to slumber in the arms of Night,  
But, lo, he wakes to find at last the Light!

## A CONVENT IDYLL.

BY G. CLARKE NUTTALL.

THE late afternoon sun was softly falling over the quiet convent garden, the grey walls of chapel and refectory were radiant with its golden touch, and the slit-like windows of the cells sparkled and reflected back the radiance. The peacefulness which lay upon all was intensified rather than marred by the slow movements and murmuring talk of two women who passed to and fro along the green lawn. The dress of the elder showed that she was one of those who would never more pass beyond the walls, while her slight air of dignity bespoke her as one in authority. Her face, beautiful in its serenity, was lighted up with affectionate earnestness as she talked with her companion, a girl in the habit of a novice.

"You are quite sure of yourself, my child?" she was saying. "Quite sure that in the years to come you will never look back with longing to the world you are about to leave?"

"Quite sure, dear Mother," broke in the girl's eager voice.

"Remember," the placid voice went on, "the step once taken is irrevocable; but it is not too late yet to turn back."

"Indeed, reverend Mother, I feel that even now the step is taken, for this very afternoon I told Father Antonius my decision. And why should I change? Where have I found such peace as in the convent? I could not go back to the world again—I shudder at the very thought of facing it. How cruel it was! How bitter I found it! And the loneliness of it without *him*! Ah, no! I have no doubt."

Over the face of the Mother Superior there flitted a passing suggestion of pain and pity as she thought how often the loss of an earthly love had led to a convent cell.

"Dear child," she said, "you know with what joy I shall welcome you when as Sister Angela you are wholly one with us."

"I would never leave the convent; all desire for aught outside has gone from me," whispered the novice.

There was a pause, during which the compline bell rang out with mellow tone; then the voice of the elder again spoke. "Within its walls may you find peace unruffled, absolute, and a divine love which will absorb your being into itself, a love as much above passion as the heavenly is above the earthly."

Her voice softened out of its evenness as she thought how the girl at her side, so ready now to renounce all the world had to offer, was, little more than a year ago, the gayest of the gay, flattered for her

beauty and sought for her wit, with admirers on every hand, and one true lover with her heart in his safe keeping.

The tears rushed into the girl's eyes at the gentle tone, and she seized impetuously the Mother Superior's hand and kissed it. "I only want to be with you all the rest of my life," she said.

The Mother Superior drew her hand away quickly—such demonstrations were not allowed in the convent. "God have you always in His keeping," she whispered softly as they entered the chapel, for the compline bell was ringing insistently its last strokes.

The girl let her fingers linger for a second in the purifying water: then, as she touched her heated forehead, its coldness brought a sense of relief, and a calm in the turmoil of her feelings, and she half involuntarily stretched out her arms towards the high altar with a passionate plea in her heart that the past might be washed away into oblivion, the present be all in all.

Then she made her way slowly up the narrow winding steps which led to the organ-loft, where Sister Ethelberta was awaiting her with as much impatience as was possible to her placid mind. It had always been the girl's task to help the Sister—who was stout and getting old, and past much exertion—with the music, and she had loved the work, partly because it was something definite to do, and partly because from her seat behind the organ she could look down on the chapel and the kneeling Sisters.

As she knelt this afternoon in her niche her thoughts strayed away from the prayers, and the contrast between her past life of fashion and frolic, and this present one of monotonous uneventful placidity, struck her in a way it had never done before.

But she had no desire to go back to the past, for she had tasted of the salt of love and then lost it, and now the whole of life in the world seemed insipid, tasteless, repugnant, and without savour. And then she remembered how the morrow would be the last Sunday she would spend outside the inner convent pale, and she wondered what the future would bring, and then suddenly it flashed across her that there was no future, nothing but an endless repetition of the present, until the end.

She glanced along the lines of kneeling Sisters and wondered which of them she would resemble in the days to come.

There was Sister Martha, from whose dull face and closed eyes she turned with impatience; and Sister Marie, whose pale transparency was scarcely human, and who by prayer and fasting had so alienated herself from the world that she could feel no sympathy with frail humanity; and Sister Agatha, whose tender soul tortured itself to find sins which were not there; and rows of other Sisters all differing in detail, but all alike in their expression of serenity and content.

There was the Mother Superior a little apart, and on her the girl's glance lingered with loving reverence, for her gentleness and saintliness were writ large in her face. And the last rays of the setting sun

falling through the stained-glass windows threw flecks of rich crimson and royal blue on the kneeling figures, and tinged them with warmth, and made beautiful the long black robes and the veils of the novices, and her eye was satisfied with the picture.

And from these her glance strayed out, down the chapel, beyond the high iron screen, where a few scattered forms showed dimly through the gathering dusk, men and women, mostly women, from the neighbouring village come to tell their beads, among whom now and then a tourist stranger sat, drawn by the music of the sweet-voiced nuns of St. Ursula. A volume of silvery sound swept upwards as the final chant was sung, and as it died away, and silence reigned, the girl collected with compunction her straying thoughts, with a remembrance that penance must be done for the lapse.

One by one the forms behind the screen disappeared, then one by one the veiled sisters rose and, with a deep obeisance to the high altar, withdrew silently. Sister Ethelberta played on, filling the chapel with tones of sweetness and harmony until it was all deserted, and the gloom gathered, and only the ever-watchful eye of the lamp before the Virgin, and the flicker of candles on the altar, showed light. The music stayed, and Sister Ethelberta rose and wended her way. The girl collected the music, and closed the organ, lingering as she did so with a curious sense of exaltation, a curious feeling of finality. Then slowly she, too, turned to leave.

By one of the chapels she stopped, and gazed wistfully towards the gracious face of the Virgin Mother. And out of the gloom in the silence a voice thrilled "Josie!"

She stood transfixed, her eyes dilated. It was *his* voice! The voice she knew silent in this world was speaking to her from the Great Unknown. But no sense of surprise filled her. It was surely not strange that she should hear it again now that she had left the world for ever. It had come to say farewell.

"Josie"—this time nearer.

"Ah, Chris—my Chris! Farewell," broke from the girl.

Before the last words had left her lips she was swept off her feet in a passionate embrace which left her breathless, overwhelmed, passive in its intensity.

"Josie, speak to me. My heart's delight. What joy to be with you again! Ah, your sweet face!"

She struggled to be free, and the strong arms loosed her, but her hands were kept in a close grip. This was no vision from another world.

She felt the man's hot breath upon her face.

"Chris, Chris, where have you been? I—they said you were dead." Her voice died away in a wail.

"Yes, yes, I know. Good heavens, how you must have suffered. But I was not dead, only shut up in a Turkish prison. But I have come back now, Josie. The gaoler—less devil than the rest of

them—I bribed with all I had, and promises of more. Don't cry now, sweetheart. It is all right again. I am here."

The girl shook with great sobs.

"Chris, it is too late. Don't you know—the convent——"

"Know, Josie? Why, what is there to know? except that you are staying with the Sisterhood. Heavens, surely you are not vowed? Don't say I am too late!" She gave a little cry of pain as his grip crushed her hands. He loosed them instantly, and covered her fingers with hot kisses. "You have not taken the vows?" he insisted. "You have not had time."

The girl was calmer again.

"Monday," she said, "my Saint's day; but it is all settled, I cannot draw back now. Father Antonius—I told him finally to-day. I said I would never look back."

The man drew himself up with a sigh of relief.

"Then I am not too late, dearest. Your vows were made to me first."

The heavy curtain at the end of the chapel was pulled aside, and a stream of light fell across the aisle. The laboured steps and asthmatic breathing of Sister Ethelberta came towards them. Josie involuntarily fell back a step into the arm of her lover, and he drew her still deeper into the shadow.

"My sister, my sister," whispered Sister Ethelberta up the organ stair; then, receiving no answer, she panted up to find only a closed organ and darkness. "She must have gone into the refectory. Strange that I did not see her pass through," she muttered, as she went by them again. The leather curtain lifted, the light streamed in, then vanished, and they were once more alone.

A low contented laugh.

"See, Josie, my darling, it was I you chose then; you would not leave me to go with that old Sister. Why did you come to the convent at all? Why did you not wait?"

"Why, Chris, they were all so sure you were dead; it was even in the newspapers; and I, too, thought you were. And everything seemed so dreadful without you. Then I heard of the Reverend Mother here, of her goodness and saintliness, and I thought if I were here I might come to be resigned, and not think such dreadful things of God for taking you away. And so I did too, Chris; it is quite true. I was—no, not happy—but not so dreadfully, wildly unhappy."

"Poor child!"

"And then I never wanted to go back, and so I felt I would take the vow and never leave the convent again—never—never! They have all been so good to me here, and have all warned me so much about putting my hand to the plough and then looking back. And, though I have not said my vows in the chapel publicly, yet I have said them in my heart to God."

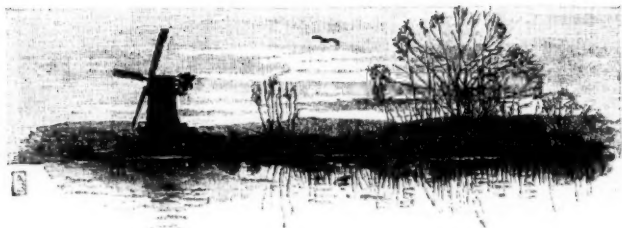
"And God would not accept them. See, Josephine, he has sent

me back in the nick of time. He might have sent me a week later, too late; but He has not. He knew I should be in time. And, Josie, look up at me." She raised her eyes to his pleading ones, and he pushed off the long white veil that encircled her. "You are mine. You gave yourself to me long ago. You cannot give yourself again." He turned her towards the picture of the Virgin, who was smiling down upon her divine Son. "See, Josie, she was no cloistered nun; she was a saint in the world! Mother and wife, and she is blessing us."

And the Reverend Mother only smiled a sweet sad smile as she kissed the girl.

"Not all are called to the higher lonely life of the cloister, and I think you are one left to serve God in the world," she said.

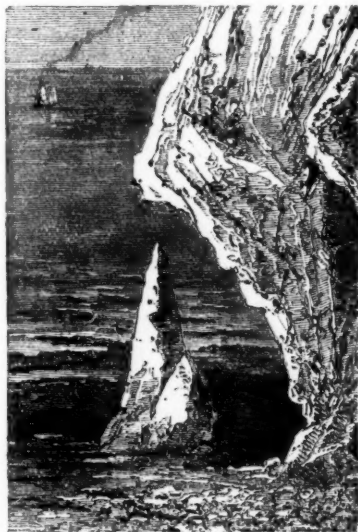
The Sisters and the novices all rejoiced at the ending of the little romance which had so closely touched their uneventful lives, and only Sister Marie murmured as she gave a frigid kiss something about remembering in prayer those who turned back from the plough.





## GHOSTS AND HEALING WATERS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN," "IN LOTUS LAND," ETC., ETC.



SHAKESPEARE'S CLIFF.

WE were staying at Folkestone where H. had been spending many weary invalid months, and so our short journey to Dover was an easy matter. We were on the spot, as it were.

This it is, which makes a residence in any of the Southern Counties so agreeable and convenient. You are half-way to the Continent. North of the capital, on the other hand, makes the journey across the Channel a matter of time and difficulty. You must pass through London. You miss your train by five minutes. If you have not five hours to wait in consequence, it may be even worse: you may have to pass the night in town, a

black fog raging, and get up betimes the next morning (the black fog still making everything dark as Erebus) to catch the mail train.

But on that sunny morning we had only a drive through that intensely ugly part of Folkestone which by means of the Dover Road leads to the Junction. Waiting there we caught sight of a splendid St. Bernard led by a porter, and crossed the line to make friends with him; looking upon all true St. Bernards as old friends, in spite of one of their species having once nearly brought us to an untimely end.

This one at the station was a magnificent fellow. His master and three other porters tried to coax him on to the weighing-machine in the office, and after five minutes' hard work, pulling, pushing, and coaxing, the thing was accomplished. The ten-months-old dog had a splendid record. As a jockey in the dog world he would have been quite out of the field.

In spite of that other wicked dog, who flew at us, his master, all but ending our earthly career, dogs nearly always take to us. This dog was no exception to the rule. We spoke to him, and he at once responded with all his eyes, put his paws on our shoulder, nearly knocked us down, and manifested other violent symptoms of delight.

"Won't you buy him, sir?" said the porter. "The best dog I ever had, and as you see, he's thoroughbred; right marks, doesn't carry his tail too high: not a point wrong about him."

"What's his name?" we asked.

"Sirdar, sir. My brother's out in Egypt, serving with General Kitchener, and I promised him I'd name one of my dogs Sirdar. This was the best one of the litter, and I called him Sirdar. Do buy him, sir. You see he takes to you already."

The dog knew perfectly well he was under discussion. His manifestations of friendship were painfully demonstrative. It was almost impossible to resist his appeal for ownership. We re-crossed the line. E. was standing on the platform anxiously consulting the signals, wondering why we lingered. Sirdar, with a deep bay that woke echoes in all the sheds, followed, not led by the porter but leading, or rather dragging him across at a speed that seemed far in excess of the lingering train.

"The porter wants us to buy the dog; the dog wishes to be bought," we explained to E. "We really feel inclined to close with the offer. He would make a capital travelling companion; a splendid guard for you if you ever went out alone in those remote uncivilized regions. What do you say?"

E. stood transfixed with horror and astonishment.

"You must be out of your mind," she was polite enough to remark, when the gift of speech returned to her. "We might as well encumber ourselves with a child as with a full-grown St. Bernard. And after having been nearly devoured by Leo, it would be tempting Providence to own another of his kind."

"But he is such a fine fellow," we argued. "Look at the development of the brain, the benevolence of the eye, the evident friendliness of his disposition."

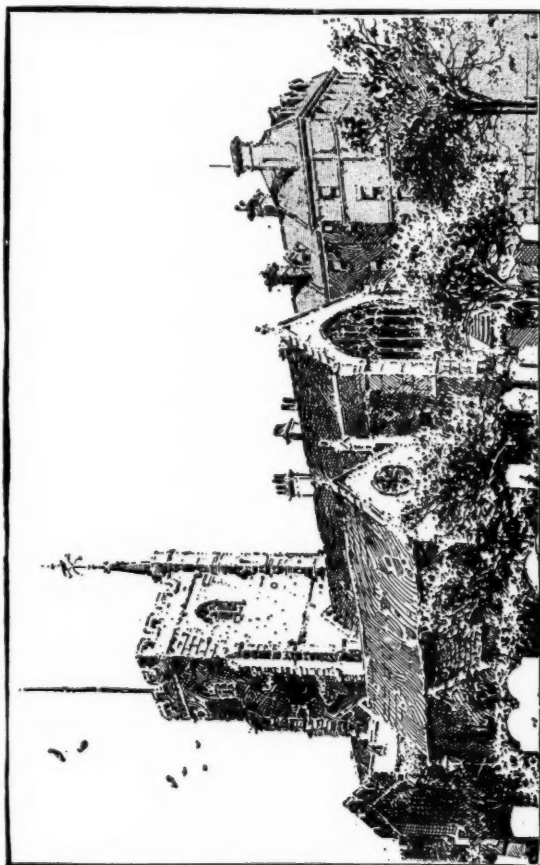
"It is not to be thought of. You really must be out of your mind," re-asserted E. "He would be more expense than both of us put together, and infinitely more trouble. The hotels would refuse to take him in; and as for the railways, he would want a van all to himself. He would eat up all the dogs within reach."

"He's as mild as milk, my lady," said the porter, touching his cap. "I do acknowledge his growl's enough to make one tremble, but then he only growls when he's something to growl at. His temper's quite lovely on ordinary occasions."

"Take him away," said E. severely. "Take him away at once. Here comes the train," as the signal went down. "You will both be

cut into a thousand pieces. And"—turning to us—"if you intend to buy up all the dogs you come across, I will have my revenge by buying up all the cats. A pretty pair we should look, re-entering England with such a caravanserai in our train."

The porter stayed a few moments longer, the dog appealed, tail



FOLKESTONE PARISH CHURCH AND PRIORY GARDENS.

wagging, tongue out of his wide-open mouth, eyes full of excitement: but E., relentless as an Oracle that has spoken—spoke no more.

"Well, sir," he said, with a deep sigh, "ladies have always ruled the world, and I suppose they always will." It wasn't quite his place to say that, but under the circumstances we forgave him. "I hope, my lady"—touching his cap again—"you'll never know the want

of him ; never be attacked by savage ruffians in them foreign parts, where I'm told they go about at all hours of the day and night seeking whom they may devour."

The man was getting a little confused in his earnestness ; had unconsciously wandered away into scriptural phraseology. But time was up and he could say no more ; the steam of the engine was seen puffing away in the distance. He went off rather mournfully, but this time he had to drag Sirdar, who hung back, and it was evidently as much as his strength could manage.

Up came the train, and we were off at last—minus Sirdar. Not many minutes after, it steamed on to Dover pier.

The Ostende boat was waiting. There was an exhilarating freshness in the air, sunshine sparkled upon the water ; everything promised well. It is, somehow, the pleasantest of all crossings, whilst that of Queenborough and Flushing is the least agreeable. Dover Harbour, the Castle and white cliffs, St. Margaret's Bay with its quiet slopes, all melted and disappeared. The sea from first to last was like a river, and we were almost sorry when the shores and buildings of Ostende came into view. Then we ran in between the piers, and once more set foot on dry land. There were various trains waiting, but ours was the last to leave—and one of the least crowded.

How well we knew and remembered all the flat country through which we passed, with its lovely gray and green tones, dykes and windmills, and quaint old towns ; its storks standing on one leg gazing at their reflections, its sad and melancholy trees. Never a hill to be seen as large as a mound, but wide, wide stretches, thinly populated, suggestive of infinite peace and solitude.

The train puffed on hour after hour, until it drew up in the great station of Cologne. It was late ; darkness had fallen, and we were not sorry, for that day, to come to an anchor.

We walked the short distance to the hotel for the sake of seeing the Cathedral by night, when it is most effective. But to-night there was no moon to throw her pale lights and shadows. Such light as there was threw no glamour of romance over this immense building, whose great defect is that it looks too new.

Again the next morning when we entered, it struck us, for the twentieth time, how disappointing was the interior, in spite of its great size ; how wanting in mystery and devotion : all that wonderful element that so distinguishes many of the French and Spanish Cathedrals. To enter Germany from France is to leave behind one all beauties of architecture. No country is richer in splendid examples than France, if it be not Spain. Their varieties and splendours are as numerous as the provinces themselves. Germany, on the contrary, is disappointing throughout.

To us, the interior of Cologne Cathedral, in spite of its magnificent Gothic proportions, is cold. Had it been completed in the thirteenth century when it was commenced, it might possibly have possessed

all the charms that are now wanting. The exterior certainly would not have looked so brand new, so painfully sharp as it does. Here reposes the heart of Marie de Medici, she who, so lovely in youth, grew so fat and heavy when youth had fled.

There are other churches in Cologne almost as interesting as the Cathedral, but to-day we had no time to renew our acquaintance with them: our train was an early one.

Once more we gazed upon the flowing Rhine, dear to the hearts of Germans, who, heavy and stolid in appearance, have yet an amount of poetry and romance within them bordering on sentimentality.

But the Rhine has lost its romance at Cologne. It is nothing but a broad flowing river, spanned by a very ugly bridge. True, the great Cathedral rears its towers and flying buttresses almost upon its banks. Towards sunset, it may be that its shadow falls upon the classic stream, and is carried through the flat reaches of Holland to lose itself in the great North Sea.

Trace that river to its source far up in a Swiss valley, and what scenes of thrilling interest you will meet! The last time we had looked upon it, the waters were so low that all boats had ceased running: and E. who had never seen the Rhine, and was eagerly looking forward to the journey by steamer, had to put up with the far less pleasant journey by rail, though even this had its advantages and was full of interest.

This morning, from our windows at the *Hôtel du Nord*, we looked upon the Rhine, now full to overflowing; but to-day we were not going Dresden-wards, and had not arranged to go up by boat—such is the malignant crossness of events! Immediately below us were innumerable small tables, where people could take early breakfast, or late coffee, and sit and dream, and hear over again for the thousandth time the legend of the Lorelei; or, growing loquacious, put an end to all repose and romance by those harsh and grating tones that set one's nerves ajar, penetrate to one's spinal marrow with a sensation that haunts one's very dreams, and at last gets on the brain. How is it that this romantic and poetical people is so unrefined and destitute of the ways and manners we English call good breeding? Before we have made an end of these papers it will be seen how it got on to *our* brain and affected *our* nerves, until we fled from a German assembly as one flees from a thing that is evil.

It was Sunday morning, but for urgent reasons we could not make Sunday a day of rest.

E. was anxious to make a raid upon No. 4, Julichs Platz, where, it is said, the only original eau-de-Cologne is to be found. On a previous visit she had given so extensive an order that the manager begged he might have the honour of entering her name in his books and considering her amongst his patronisers. Then he bowed her out, assuring her the case would be instantly despatched to Dresden, and her commands would at all times have

his best attention. On this occasion we were spared that *mauvais quart d'heure*.

She wished to make acquaintance with the Church of the Minorites, those Franciscan friars who trod in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, and seemed to have as many orders, rules, divisions and subdivisions, as there are days in the year. She wished to visit the church of St. Maria im Capitol, so called because on its site once stood the Roman Capitol—followed by the palace of the Franconian King. A church existed here as remote as the year 700; and part of the present one goes back to early in the 12th century. That first church was built by Plectrudis, wife of Pepin of Héristal, and mother of Charles Martel.

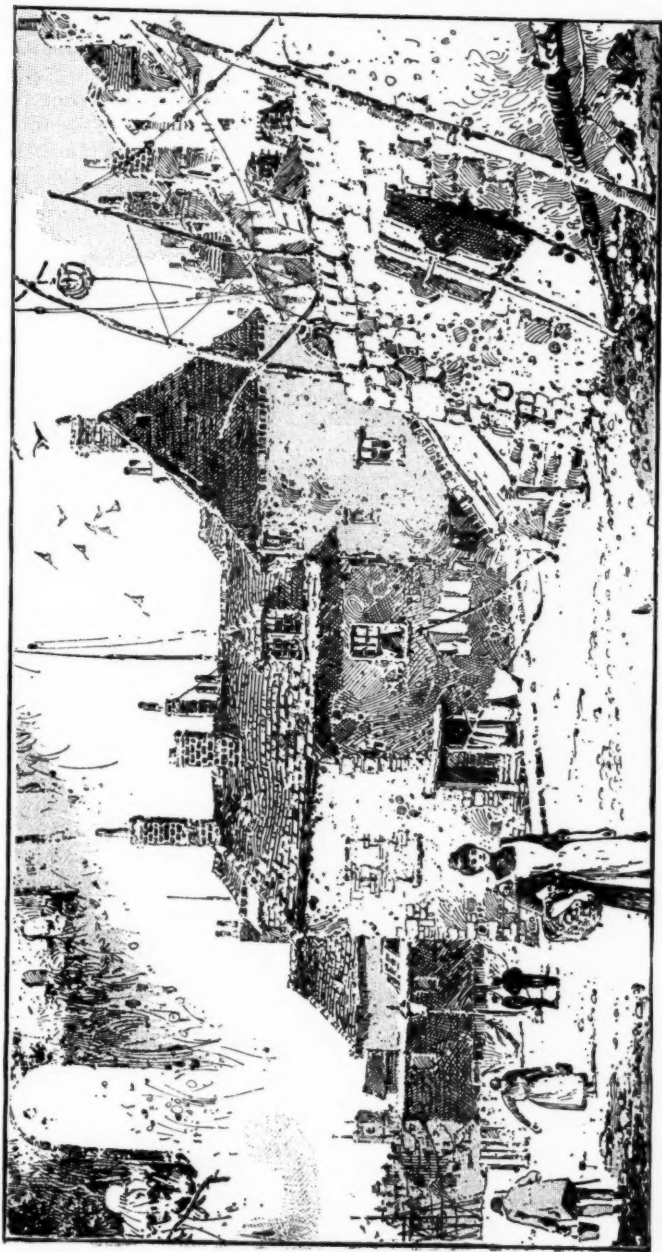
There were other churches, all dating back to early centuries. The church of St. Cæcilia, so old that its first restoration took place in 930, the second about 1150. The church of St. Pantaleon built in 964 on the site of a still more ancient church: especially interesting as having been constructed by Archbishop Bruno with the stone of the bridge thrown by Constantine over the Rhine in 308, connecting Marspforten with the Island of St. Martin—an island no longer existing. The bridge was first destroyed by the Normans, and out of its ruins grew the church of St. Pantaleon. Perhaps it is fitting that an edifice with such a warlike pedigree should now be used as a military church.

There was the church of St. Gereon, dedicated to the martyrs of the Theban legend, with Gereon their captain, who perished in 286 in the persecution of the Christians under Diocletian. The original was a round church said to have been built by Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. Traces of Roman work still exist. There was the church of St. Ursula, the English princess, who, according to the ancient legend, was murdered at Cologne on her return from a pilgrimage to Rome with her 11,000 virgins. The figure of St. Ursula in alabaster with a dove at her feet is conspicuous, and the bones of the virgin martyrs are placed in cases round the building. There was the early church of St. Andreas, containing the remains of Albertus Magnus. The church of St. Cunibert, consecrated by Archbishop Conrad, shortly before he laid the foundations for the Cathedral in 1248.

But the interest of all these churches is eclipsed by the glory surrounding the cathedral: and most visitors, having sacrificed to the greater light, neglect to pay homage to the other lights, which if lesser, are in some instances almost more interesting: have an earlier pedigree, a more romantic history.

For the history of Cologne Cathedral is not specially romantic in *fact*, though it has given rise to many delightful legends, many a fine story in the world of fiction. We all know the legend of the devil and the seven deadly sins, through which the building was supposed to suffer: and from which other legends have sprung.





A BIT OF OLD FOLKESTONE.

The foundation stone, we have seen was laid in 1248: and it is interesting to think that the stone of the earliest part was furnished by the quarries of the lordly Drachenfels.

This castle, overhanging a precipitous rock more than 1000 feet high, was built soon after the year 1100 by Arnold Archbishop of Cologne, and given over by him for a time to the Cassius Monastery at Bonn. It was Henry Count of Drachenfels who gave the stone for the Cathedral from an adjacent quarry, which still goes by the name of *Dombruch*.

As the centuries went on, evil times fell upon Drachenfels. Perhaps they had not slain the dragon from which it took its name: and perhaps the dragon was only another name for Sin, dwelling in the hearts of men. And Sin, we know, works Downfall. Here is opportunity for another fine legend. We all know how the "Castled crag of Drachenfels" appealed to Byron.

In the Thirty Years' War, the castle, now half ruined, was occupied by the Swedes; and its destruction was completed when Duke Ferdinand of Bavaria, Elector of Cologne, besieged and took it from them.

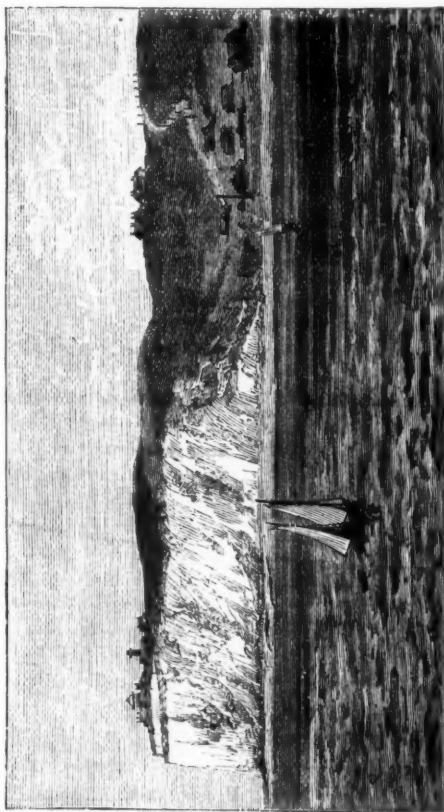
In 1322, the choir of the Cathedral was consecrated by Archbishop Henry. In 1388 the nave was first used for Divine Service; and in 1447 the bells were placed in the south tower.

But the church was very far from being completed, and enthusiasm was dying down; religious fervour was not what it had been. When the fifteenth century came to an end all work had long ceased, and the unfinished structure was left as a silent reproach to its people. A roof was put on, some bad decoration was given to the interior, and there it rested. Instead of improving, like a house in Chancery it began to show signs of dilapidation. In that memorable year, 1796, the French turned it into a storehouse for hay, the lead was all taken from the roof; ruin stared it in the face.

Then the kings of Prussia arose in their might and bestirred themselves.

In 1823 the work of restoration was begun, and in 1880 it was completed, at a cost of nearly a million of money. On the 15th of October in that year—ten years after their great victory over the French—a solemn service was held in the Cathedral to celebrate the placing of the last stone on the south tower: in other words, the final completion and conclusion of the work begun more than six hundred years before: at which celebration the Emperor William I., and all the major dukes and princes of Germany, and all the minor dukes and princes, assisted: a vast crowd. So to-day the Cathedral rears its proud head in stately perfection; and throws its shadow upon the Rhine; and rings its bells so lustily that when the wind sets that way, their sound reaches to the hills and hollows surrounding Aix la Chapelle: Aix la Chapelle, sacred to Charlemagne, who made the town the Second City in his dominions; the free city of the Holy Roman Empire: Charlemagne, who died here in 814,

after raising the see of Cologne founded in the 4th century, to an Archbishopric, and bestowing it upon his favourite chaplain Hildebold ; for there is nothing new under the sun and promotion went by favour then, as well as by merit ; only Charlemagne took care that favour and merit went hand in hand. If as much cannot be said now, in ecclesiastical matters : if the square man gets put into the



ST. MARGARET'S BAY.

round hole, and the round man gets comfortably placed when he ought to have no hole at all, why so much the greater merit to Charlemagne, who never did such things, but kept his conscience free from offence.

And Hildebold built the first cathedral church to commemorate his being first primate of Cologne, presenting it with a rare library, which still exists. And because all these old churches are

neglected and extinguished in the glory of the Cathedral, which looks so new and stiff and cold in its magnificence, E. specially wished to pay her devotions to the lesser lights, and assure them that she was not dazzled by the greater; but it had to be postponed to a future opportunity, numbers of which doubtless will arise.

At the Hôtel du Nord they registered our luggage, gave us our tickets, attended us to the omnibus in waiting—quite a small crowd of officials, including one porter to open the door, a second to close it, a third to give the signal of departure, and a fourth to meet us on the platform—all rendered smiling and amiable by the inevitable backsheesh. The last was a magnificent specimen of gold-braided uniform, quite over six feet high.

Well for us that we had his protection, for the platform was thronged with an excited crowd of people, all going their separate ways in search of a day's pleasure.

It was nothing but a rush and a series of mistakes: excursionists bound north getting into trains going south and having to get out again. The noise, confusion, tearing to and fro, shouting in German language from German throats, cramming of thirty people into a compartment made for ten—until one no longer wondered at the conjuror's inexhaustible hat—the shrieks of some poor unfortunate skeleton of a man suddenly crushed and extinguished by a mountainous frau sitting down upon him without warning and with all the coolness imaginable: all this we had never seen equalled on an English occasion.

E. unaccustomed to such scenes was alarmed and agitated, though in our first-class compartment (patronized on the Continent, it is said, only by cooks, Englishmen and fools) the rough element was severely absent.

Opposite to us was our one fellow-traveller: a tall, thin man, evidently a gentleman, dressed in deep black even to his studs and moustache (but the latter seemed black by nature), with a most melancholy cast of face and a frequent indulgence in deep sighs.

"Poor man," E. murmured in English; "he has evidently lost his wife; do say something to him and try to cheer him when the train has started."

Here came another frantic rush past the carriage door of a crowd vainly seeking for places. Again E. was terrified.

"What shall we do if they come in here?" she cried. "Never, never again, come what may, will I travel on a Sunday."

"Madame," said the melancholy gentleman in deep sepulchral tones but in elegant French: "Madame, be reassured; where I am, they dare not come. You are as safe here, amidst this *foule*, as you would be in your own boudoir."

At this moment, however, there came up another of those intolerable continental nuisances: a traveller with an unlimited amount of

"hand" baggage: a term frequently representing half a waggon load of personal effects.

Without preamble or any weak hesitation, he entered the carriage, and commenced hauling in his property. Half-a-dozen Gladstone bags, numerous bundles; umbrellas, sticks, rugs and hat-boxes without end. All this he calmly disposed all over the place, until there seemed hardly breathing-room for anyone.

We counted thirty-four packages. E. looked unutterable things at us. "Is this to be tolerated?" the look said, as plainly as eyes could speak.

The new traveller, as evidently not a gentleman, sank back in his only reserved seat, puffing and blowing with his tremendous exertions. That we were inconvenienced was a matter of perfect indifference to him.

Our melancholy fellow-traveller looked on to the platform, beckoned to a gold-laced official, said not a word when he came up, but gave him a look that was sufficiently intelligible. The official understood; gazed at his travelling Pantechnicon; then severely at the man in the corner, puffing and blowing and fanning himself with the greatest calmness.

"Your ticket, sir," said the official severely; "where are you going?"

The man stopped his fanning, found his ticket after a great amount of searching, and presented it.

"You are in the wrong carriage," said the official. "Get out of it quickly, for the train is about to start."

"Donnerwetter!" cried the dismayed intruder. "Just as I had comfortably arranged everything and settled myself! Where does this carriage go to?"

"That doesn't concern you," promptly replied the official. "And if you lose time in asking useless questions, you will find you have gone very much astray."

To remove all that luggage and get rid of its owner was a work of difficulty, but it was done at last, the official, bowing politely to those who remained in the carriage, closed the door and we were left in peace. Our melancholy companion almost smiled.

"You see, madame, you had nothing to fear from the crowd or from any one else," he quietly observed to E. "I had only to sign to an official and all was done. To tell you the truth, when I saw that horror approaching with his impossible number of packages, I let him get in and comfortably arrange himself—at our expense, I admit—for the pleasure of having him turned out again. If people travel with that amount of baggage in hand, they have no business in first-class carriages, nor in third either for that matter. They should have a fourth-class without seats, and be forced to stand. It is an abuse of our railway system: a mistaken system, I admit. Heavy baggage should not be allowed for a moment in carriages devoted to

passengers. But I have no sympathy with the offenders and no pity for them."

"It was a surprise to see that sort of person enter a first-class carriage," we remarked. "In England we have an old saying that only cooks, Englishmen, and fools travel first-class on the Continent."

"Ah, monsieur, a very old saying," returned the melancholy man, who, however, was gradually brightening. "And when the saying was first uttered, there was probably some truth in it. Now there is none. The world has changed; the condition of things is not what it was; Germany itself is growing richer; a thousand people travel now where five travelled fifty years ago; yes, without exaggeration; it is a melancholy fact; a misery to us of the upper classes, who have nerves to be shattered—and you will find that the first-class carriages are now almost as much patronised as the second and third. In fact, I often find the vulgar *nouveaux riches* in the first, and the ancient families with a long pedigree in the second. I believe in England—for I perceive that monsieur is English"—with a bow—"highly respectable people travel third; but you will not find that in Germany. In one sense there is more *rapprochement* amongst the classes here than in England, and in another sense less. The line of demarcation is never passed."

The train had been in motion some time, and now drew up at Bonn, where a great crowd got out, and a lesser crowd got in.

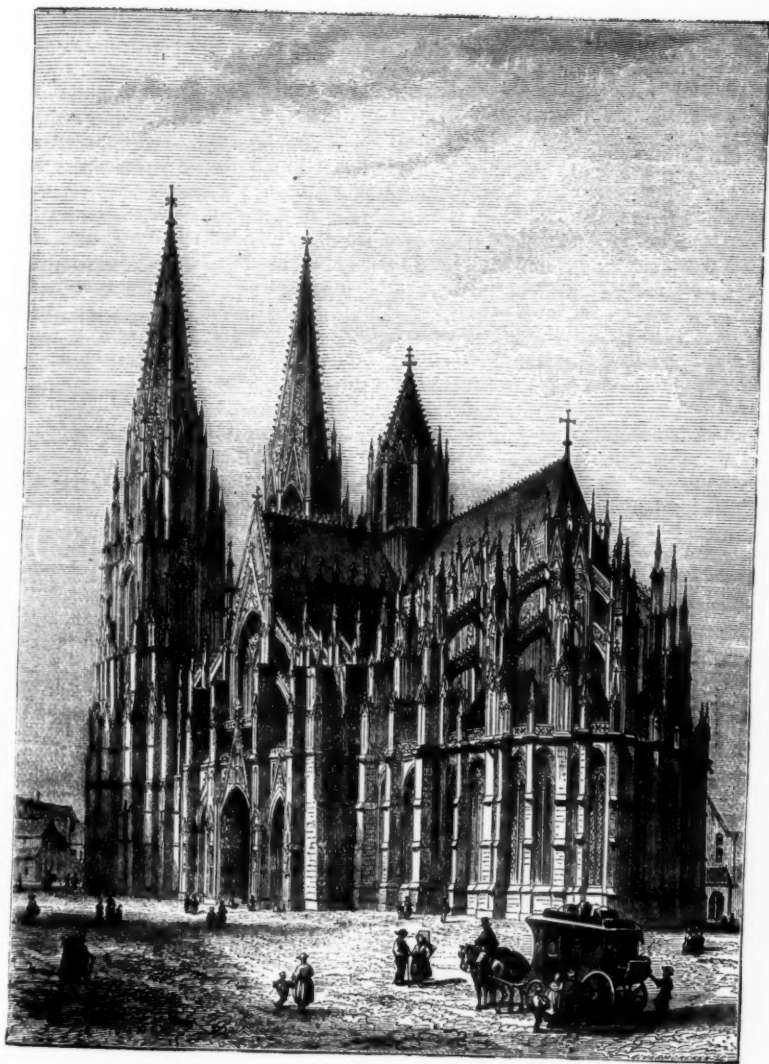
"It is always the same every Sunday, as soon as the fine weather sets in; the whole world seems to turn out, wild for a day's change of scene, whether it be country or town; anything for a mere change; distraction. Pleasure is now the keynote of life, the only thing worth living for, they think; and if they work hard six days in the week, the great incentive is the power of being able to have a thorough outing on the seventh. Perhaps we must not blame them. We with our lofty ideals, and higher aspirations, and serious purposes in life must remember that the lower class have no great aims and ambitions to uphold them. Theirs to wait and serve. And it must be said that they do work. The masses have not yet got the upper hand of us as they have in England."

The train steamed onwards. Our companion relapsed for a moment into melancholy, as though he suddenly remembered that he had a sad *rôle* to keep up. His countenance went into mourning, to match his clothes, studs, and moustache. Even his watch-chain was of jet or vulcanite, with alternate gold links.

E. gave us another expressive look. It said as plainly as possible: "Now's your time. Seize your opportunity. Do say something and console the poor man."

We felt a little nervous. It seemed almost an intrusion upon his privacy. What right had we, the acquaintance of an hour, to offer him our condolence in what was evidently a severe family affliction?





COLOGNE CATHEDRAL AS IT APPEARS TO-DAY.

Would he not deem it an impertinence? But a sigh more deep than the last seemed to answer all objections, and taking our courage in both hands, we addressed him. After all he was very communicative, and seemed distinctly drawn towards us. He would not resent our good intentions.

"Sir," we began, with some diffidence; "you seem in trouble, in great affliction; you appear to have had a serious loss. Will you allow us to offer you our sincere condolences? Troubles are not needlessly sent. May we not hope that those lofty ideals and higher aspirations and serious purposes of life to which you just now referred, will all be strengthened——"

We hesitated in astonishment. A flash like a brilliant gleam of sunshine breaking through clouds passed over his face, transforming it, making it ten years younger, giving it a singularly beautiful expression. The change was quite startling. Then he paused a moment, seemed to deliberate rapidly, gave another deep sigh—it almost sounded like a sigh of relief—and spoke.

"Do not waste your pity," he said; "rather offer me your congratulations."

E. turned a little pale. Was he going to prove an ogre—rejoice in the loss of an amiable and long-suffering wife? He did not look that sort of inhuman wretch.

"In order that you may do that," he continued, "I must take you into my confidence. I am not overwhelmed with grief as you would imagine; I am wild with joy. But I am so afraid of letting my joy be seen, of giving boisterous expression to it, and so creating a scandal, that I have to clothe my countenance in grief and put on the deepest mourning. For I hate scandals, or to be, in the smallest degree, a topic of conversation amongst my neighbours. In a word, monsieur"—and here his face again broke out into sunshine—"I have just buried my mother-in-law. She was a cat. Now you will not pity but congratulate me."

It was a relief to find that after all we were not travelling with a Bluebeard.

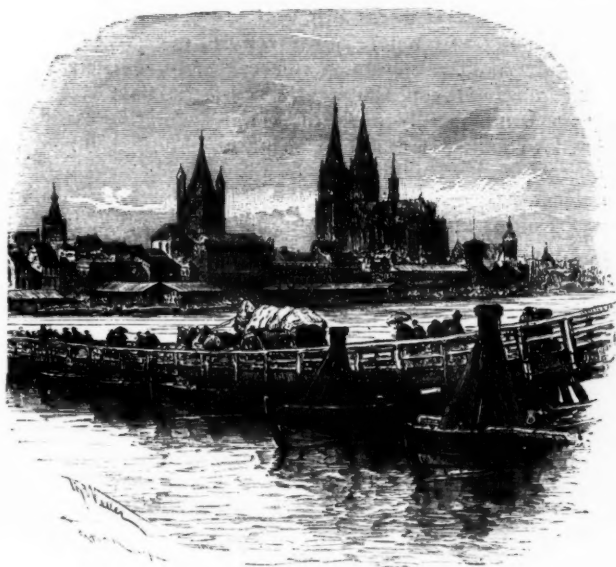
"You must have been a great sufferer," we observed sympathetically—it was difficult to know what to say under the circumstances.

"My mother-in-law was a cat," he continued; "but a cat without any pretence to a velvet paw; her claws were always out, and she was a perfect spitfire, with her back always arched. My wife and I are as happy as two turtledoves when we are alone; but my mother-in-law paid us a six months' visit every year, upset all our calculations, thwarted all our plans, set everybody quarrelling with everybody else, and in short made life an absolute burden. For the other six months in the year she could not let us alone, but pestered us with annoying letters, and, directly and indirectly, placed a hundred obstacles in the daily course of our lives. She had made her own husband's life a perfect misery upon earth, and she was insanely jealous of our own

happiness. It was sufficient for her to see any human being happy to make her their bitter enemy, but much more so those of her own family and household. I believe she would have ended in killing off both my wife and myself, if one fine day she had not caught a cold which settled on her chest, and she died; died, monsieur, fighting the air, because she had no one else to fight. In short she was a cat."

"But are you not rather maligning the cat-tribe?" we asked.

"Oh, there are bad cats," he replied; "very bad cats; and my mother-in-law was one of the worst. Now can you wonder that I rejoice; that I feel in paradise; that I am absolutely afraid of



COLOGNE.

allowing my delight to be seen; and so clothe my face as I do my body, in deep mourning? But I shall not keep it up long. After all, the days of mourning for a mother-in-law are restricted. Ah, here we reach my destination," as the train steamed into Coblenz. "And there is my wife on the platform. It is hard to say it, but I am afraid she is really and truly happy and at rest for the first time in her life. We have a charming château near Arenberg. I wish we could have the pleasure of receiving you there."

As the train stopped, a lady in black came up to the carriage door. Her face was pale—paler perhaps by contrast with the deep mourning that surrounded it—but extremely beautiful; without a

trace of the high cheekbones and innumerable angles that so unpleasantly distinguish the German women; whilst her voice—oh, wonder of wonders in this Rhineland—was soft and musical. He got out of the carriage, embraced her affectionately, asked her several rapid questions, to which she replied in clear harmonious tones, and then turned to us.

"Adieu, monsieur," he said, at the same time taking off his hat and making a low bow to E. "Adieu. May you have a most agreeable journey. And," he whispered, "may you never have a mother-in-law who is a cat."

His countenance beamed with happiness and delight as he spoke; it did one a positive good to see him; but when he turned and offered his arm to his wife, and walked away followed by a footman carrying his rug and umbrella, his face had once more assumed its grave outlines. The station master came up, opened for him a private exit from the platform, and whilst the train still waited, we saw them drive rapidly away in a well-appointed carriage. He happened to look out at the moment, caught sight of our face at the window, and waved his hand, whilst his lips seemed to form themselves into the words: "She was truly a cat, and one of the very worst of her kind."

For a time the train followed the course of the Rhine through all the romantic scenery so well-known, and praised almost beyond its merits. At Mainz we said good-bye to the river, and made straight for Darmstadt. Here we changed trains, or rather platforms, for our carriage was shunted to another line. We had half an hour to wait, and most of the passengers employed the time in patrolling the platform, devouring sausage rolls of a very awful description, but which to them was evidently so much ambrosia.

Long before this, however, we had got rid of the great crush. The last detachment had poured out at Coblenz, a perfect gaol delivery, and the very engine seemed to puff with less labour, the train run more smoothly in consequence. At Darmstadt there were few passengers left. Sundry officers in magnificent Sunday uniforms walked about, plainly asking for admiration, but there was nothing else to call for remark. The train rolled away again, through wide stretching plains, which gives one a feeling that Germany is a sort of small Russia—a country unlimited in extent.

The villages one sees here and there dotted about the plains, look the very emblems of peace and repose, and no doubt are so. The heavy, plodding inhabitants drink their beer and eat their sauerkraut, and perform their daily round week by week and year by year, earning small wages and living upon less; with few wants and no ambitions; until the pale Reaper comes and mows them down, and one by one gathers in the human harvest.

It is only in the towns, large and populated, that the comparatively new thirst for pleasure and excitement exists, and has to be gratified;

the occasion creates the demand, and the want of opportunity in these far-away villages of the plains has kept the people more or less in the primitive condition of a century ago.

Those who change and advance are those who emigrate. England is overrun with the German element, and whilst they are earning English wages—a hundred times in advance of anything they would earn in their own country—they both hate and abuse us and would to-morrow turn against us if it suited their purpose.

These emigrants occasionally go back to their plain-villages—their *heimath*, their *Vaterland*—and carry with them something of the atmosphere of the great far-off world. They become heroes, and the gentle little Gretchens, with their calm brows and plaited hair and becoming bodices, fall down and worship them, losing their heart, but too often not finding one in return. The emigrants have outgrown the village atmosphere; early impressions have passed away; they marry out in the wide world to which they now belong; marry someone who will not only help to make both ends meet, but add to the hoard accumulating in the stocking foot. The little country village Gretchens sigh away their hearts in vain, and bestow their hands upon some village swain who has never wandered beyond the sound of his own church bell; or they languish on in single blessedness into the calm dull regions of old maidenhood.

As the train went on, the plains seemed vast and very thinly populated; and by and by we stopped at Schweinfurth, where we had nearly an hour to wait.

We were only some twenty miles from Kissingen, and yet should not reach it for another three hours. This was the most provoking and tiring part of the whole journey.

And here we found that admirable system that all English railway companies would do well to imitate. Every person who is not a traveller yet wishes to go on to the platform, has first to go to an automatic machine, put in a penny and pull out a ticket. This prevents that accumulation of rough and rabble which too often distinguishes our own railway stations and makes the platforms a scene of bewildering confusion, where pickpockets reap a harvest and maiden ladies lose their heads—as well as their purses. In Germany the system brings a considerable revenue to the country; last year it was said to bring six million marks—about £300,000: and it would do the same for the railway companies in England, besides being a blessing to travellers and their friends.

There was not much to be seen in the old town of Schweinfurth, which prospers by reason of its trade. But it has had a past: was the *Trajectus Suevorum* of the Romans: the great Corn Market of Central Germany, in days when to transport merchandise from one end of that great tract of country to the other was a work of time and difficulty. In those days Schweinfurth had all eyes turned towards it as the hope of the fatherland. The price of its corn represented

the welfare of the people. And there were the fat years and the lean years; years of plenty and years when the wolf howled at the door and would not be driven away.

All that is over for Schweinfurth. It is no longer a name to conjure by; but its walls and moat that once guarded the precious fruit of the earth still exist, and some of the old gateways have escaped the demon of destruction. They have nothing left to guard now, excepting the lives of the people and the picturesque old Rathhaus, which came into existence some twenty years before our own Queen Elizabeth was thinking of returning thanks for the destruction of the Spanish Armada.

To-day Schweinfurth wore its Sunday dress. Every place was closed. The factories had holiday, the tall chimneys sent forth no smoke, the town rested. Young men and maidens went about the country roads in couples, laying plans for the future and wondering how soon they could afford to set up housekeeping. And the sun declined, and evening began to grow apace before we again set out on the last stage of our journey—the few but slow and lingering miles that separated us from Kissingen.

But everything comes to an end, and about nine o'clock our train steamed into Kissingen—the journey was over.

It is given to most of us to take sudden impressions, likes and dislikes. For some unexplained reason, the moment we entered Kissingen, we fell in love with it; felt at home; had a conviction that here our days would pass pleasantly. Later on it was our fate to experience the opposite sensation on approaching St. Moritz in the Engadine. We had had a long and magnificent twelve hours' drive through splendid scenery: and as our coachman turned the corner of the sharp descent, and the Engadine Valley stretched before us, and lovely Silvaplana lay mapped beneath us at our feet, and St. Moritz reared its proud head in the distance—in that first glimpse there came a conviction that we should never like it, never be happy there, should be glad when the day came that we might turn away from it once for all. That also came true.

But this is anticipating. We have only just arrived at Kissingen, and St. Moritz is many a mile and many a week away.

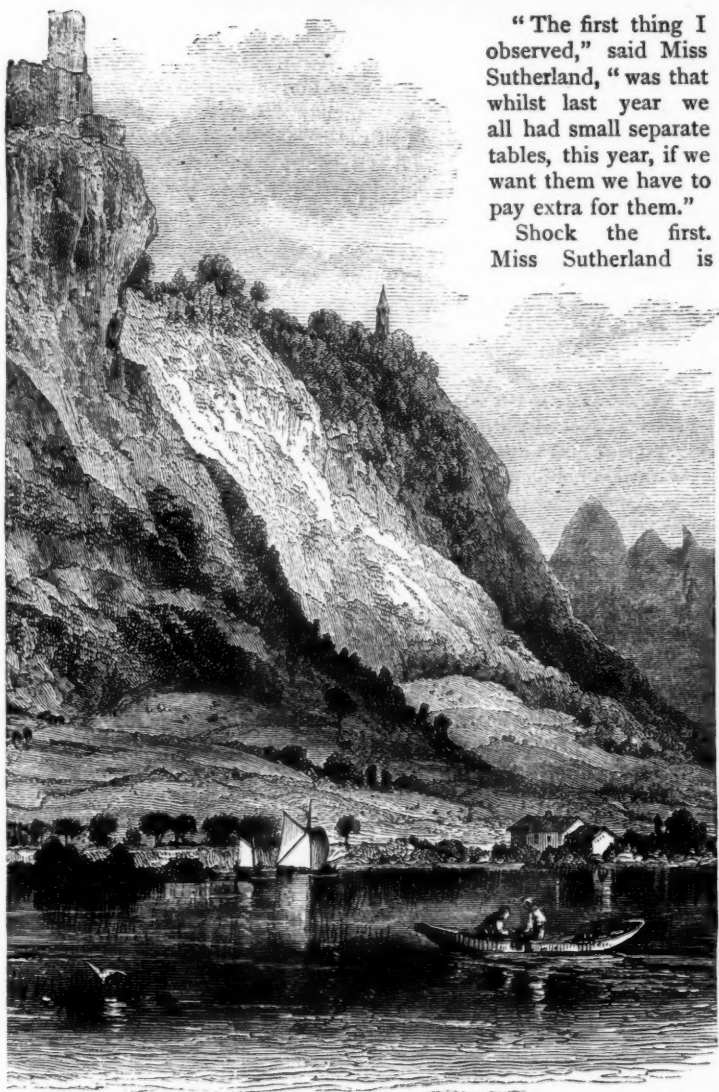
Kissingen was true to its first impression; we always liked it, and like it still, for that first impression has remained. It only lacks one thing—a good hotel. This it has not. It has three principal hotels: the buildings are excellent, every one of them, but the management leaves everything to be desired.

We had friends staying at the *Hôtel de Russie*, and upon their recommendation went to it also. They had been there the year before, and many a year before, and always found it comfortable and well appointed. But, alas, another proprietor had arisen, and everything was changed. And the strange thing was that as the days passed the commissariat department went from bad to worse.



"The first thing I observed," said Miss Sutherland, "was that whilst last year we all had small separate tables, this year, if we want them we have to pay extra for them."

Shock the first. Miss Sutherland is



DRACHENFELS.

one who sees everything *couleur de rose* ; who goes about with heart and hands full of kindly thoughts and gifts for all mankind. To her the whole world is kin ; nothing ruffles her, nothing puts her

out, and if she is absolutely imposed upon she does not resent it, but enters it calmly in her diary as part of her day's experiences.

We cannot pretend to be so long-suffering and full of charity. It is very beautiful to see, but extremely difficult to imitate. The highest amount of discipline at most imposes upon one a discreet silence, the gall and wormwood are still in the heart.

That first night as the omnibus rattled down from the station and stopped at the hotel, we knew not what was before us, but from Miss Sutherland's descriptions expected a great deal. In some things we were not disappointed. She was not there to welcome us, but instead a note was placed in E.'s hand.

"I am excessively tired—the baths are very fatiguing—and have retired for the night. We shall meet in the morning, when I hope to welcome you. The triumphal arches arrived too late to be erected, but fireworks at night will celebrate your arrival."

Evidently Miss Sutherland was not too tired to be facetious.

The landlord approached: was extremely sorry, but for that night could only give us rooms on the third floor. To-morrow or the next day he would have better rooms at our disposal.

This surprised us, as Miss Sutherland had bespoken rooms some days ago. Moreover, it was yet early for Kissingen—the month of May, though the end of it. But everyone should go early to Kissingen. In July and August it becomes unpleasantly crowded, and with a different class of people.

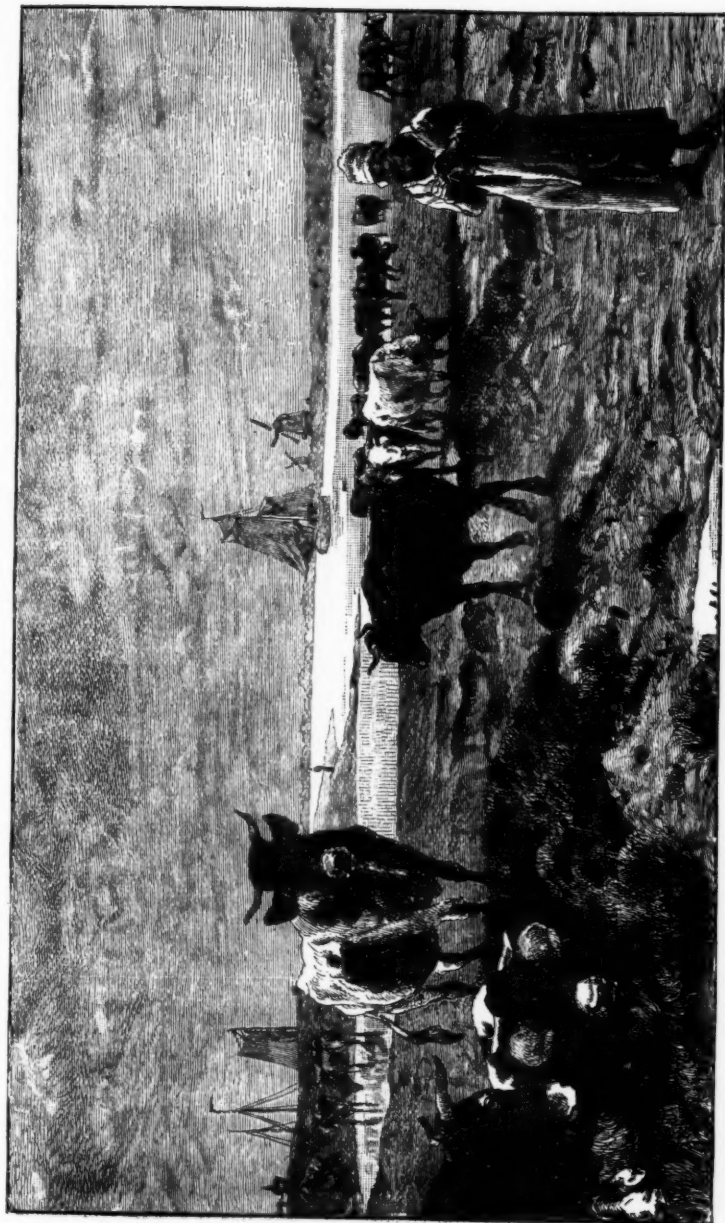
Was there a lift?

No; a lift was being constructed; it would be ready in a day or two. We concluded that meant that it would be ready towards the end of our stay, and in the end this turned out to be the case.

We mounted to the third floor, which proved to be the top of the house, and by the end of the next day were so pleased with our rooms that we refused to change them. The view was pleasant; we had delightful air over the tops of the houses; E.'s room overlooked the Kurgarten on the one side, our own, on the other, the quiet gardens of the hotel, with wooded hills rising beyond.

There was something specially light and cheerful about the rooms, whilst at the same time they were essentially restful and reposeful; we felt at home in them at once.

Then we had the best chamber-maid and the best waiter in the whole establishment. Rosa was an Austrian, and proud of her nationality. Nothing offended her more than to be considered a Prussian. She hated and despised the race, considering the Austrians much more distinguished, refined and well bred. In this she was right. She was a tall, young and handsome woman, very superior to the servants one generally finds in hotels. She declared she had never served before excepting in private families, and after this season never would again. She was never so happy as when doing something for you. "You cannot command me too much,"



WHERE THE RHINE FLOWS TO THE SEA.

she said to E., and during our stay there was unremitting in her attentions.

With our waiter we were equally fortunate. As soon as we had departed in the morning for the waters, the rooms were arranged to perfection, and we returned to find the breakfast-table spread faultlessly; he would come in and wait, and finally clear everything away, and not a sound had been heard.

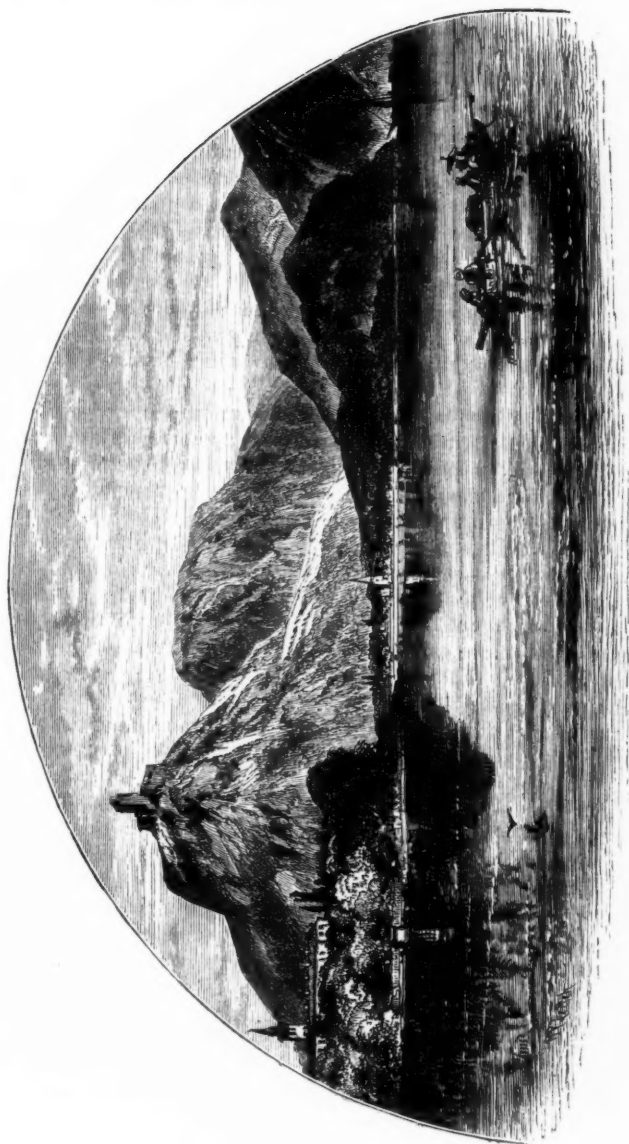
So far we had never been more comfortable in our lives in any hotel; perhaps never so comfortable; but there the merits of the hotel ended; we soon found that the drawbacks outweighed the advantages.

One of the great charms of Kissingen is its freedom from all restraint; it is unconventional. No one goes there from motives of fashion. Ladies do not take cartloads of dresses and change them half-a-dozen times a day. Anything will do for Kissingen, they say, and certainly some of them turn out the most astonishing frights ever seen on any day but the fifth of November. Not so much the English as the foreigners: Germans, Dutch, and Russians. It is much frequented by all; and they all drink the waters as though their lives depended upon it. For whilst in many other watering places fashion and lounging, pleasure and killing time are the chief ends in view, everyone goes to Kissingen with the one serious object of improving the health. Not a few go for reasons of *embouppoint*. Time has not been kindly to them; they have grown stout, and fly to the waters to be made slim again. With women we will call it the influence of time; with men the pleasures of the table. They have eaten too freely of the good things of life. At Kissingen they partially recover, go back to the world and indulge again. That is the history. And so it goes on.

But this is only one class of patients. The waters are also of use to those who have not lost their waist, nor turn the scale at 16 or 17 stone. They are especially good for those who have fallen victims to that modern demon scourge, Influenza. Girls who have outgrown their strength, lost their digestion, and become pallid and listless, here recover the spring of their walk and their lost roses. In others gout is reduced and rheumatism disappears.

But though they diminish the burden of life, they will not make old people young again; threescore years cannot go back to its salad days; no one must expect that. The mill that grinds people young again has yet to be invented; the bubbling stream that, quaffed, restores lost youth has still to be discovered. The alchemists of old spent fortune and life in searching for the Elixir of Life, but never found it. Perhaps that is reserved for the fortunate ones who live at the end of the 20th century.

Our first Monday morning rose bright and glorious, and we went forth with Miss Sutherland to reconnoitre the town; the position of the baths, where they drank the waters, the mysteries of the



DRACHENFELS.

Kurhaus; and finally to pay a visit to our doctor, who was also her doctor.

But we were at opposite ends of the cure. It was her visit of farewell: it was our initial visit.

She was accompanied by her friend Miss O'Grady, an Irish lady, with the Irish wit and humour, given to superstitions and impressions. She had seen ghosts and banshees without number, heard mysterious sounds, received many warnings concerning her friends. Her delight was to get hold of a good listener gifted with a certain amount of imagination, and pour out upon them, with her Irish command of words, story after story of mystery and horror, until she saw the flesh creep, the face grow pale, the eyes open large and round, and the knees knock together. This made her supremely happy and comfortable; she felt she had done her duty by the shadows of the unseen world, who are said occasionally to come back to this world of ours.

Miss O'Grady also was bringing her stay to an end, and declaring that never had she left any place with so much regret as she was leaving Kissingen. When we had sufficiently learnt the mysteries of the place—what we should have to do during our stay, what avoid, and where go—we made our way through the quiet streets to the doctor's abode. It was a quaint and very pretty house, in the quietest of thoroughfares; partly covered with creepers, and with casements built out that gave it quite a semi-oriental appearance. Opposite to it was an old-fashioned square opening, with more quaint old houses, and in the centre a pump and fountain at which women drew water for household purposes, and if they were pretty, looked very picturesque.

But the women of Kissingen were by no means always pretty, or even generally so. They had, however, the gift of good will and amiability, and it was quite interesting to stop the country folk one met on the roads—the *paysans* of the neighbourhood—and talk to them. One was always sure of civility, a certain amount of intelligence, and they would touch upon their little histories with the most charming *naïveté* and simple confidence. In many parts of Germany the country people are rough and uncouth, look upon strangers and foreigners as their natural enemy, avoid them as far as possible; round about Kissingen on the contrary they were of a different nature; friendly and approachable and approaching.

But then the Bavarians are, as a rule, nicer than the Prussians *pur et simple*.

We rang boldly at the doctor's house. A woman opposite drawing water at the fountain, stayed her work to watch the progress of affairs. Should we be admitted she wondered. Of course it was no affair of hers, but Curiosity thy name is Woman, abroad as in England.

Yes, the Herr Doctor was at home, said the woman who opened to us. Would we walk in.



She was middle-aged, highly respectable, and evidently very much at home. It looked as though she had ruled and reigned here for half a century, and like all good old servants, had possibly ended in becoming her master's tyrant. But we soon discovered that the Herr Doctor had a wife, and so Katrine had only to obey; not hers to tyrannize and command.

It was quite a pretty house inside, with everything in apple-pie order, and we knew afterwards that many of the charming things we saw were presents from his grateful patients, amongst whom are not a few of the crowned heads of Europe. But what struck us from the first moment was its strange, almost mysterious stillness and silence. We were shown upstairs into the waiting salon, where again everything was almost painfully straight and orderly, not a chair a quarter of an inch out of its place.

Here we all four sat down, and Miss O'Grady to pass the time gave us another ghost story, told in a gruesome whisper.

This time it was not to make our flesh creep, but to take herself away from her own thoughts. The idea of a farewell visit was painful to her. She was emotional, or she would not have been Irish, and she was evidently afraid of breaking down.

"I have been so happy here," she said, breaking off at a tangent in the very middle of her ghost-story. It was a very awful ghost, we remember, and appeared to a lady as the clock struck the witching hour in a white cotton night-cap of the last century, and long white trailing garments; and she had broke off just where it had given three groans and stretched out long skeleton claws to grasp its victim's throat.

"I have been so happy here," said Miss O'Grady, "have derived so much good from the cure; and have quite fallen in love with the doctor, as well as the place. As for the waters they are quite delicious, and the baths are heavenly."

There were tears in her eyes, and fearing she would become hysterical, we brought her back to the ghost.

"Three groans," we prompted; "and skeleton claws stretched out to grasp the victim's throat. What happened next?"

She revived at once; looked quite cheerful; gazed into our eyes with an intense stare that froze our spinal marrow: Miss Sutherland the while, sitting with a pocket-handkerchief to her face and shivering.

"At the third groan," pursued Miss O'Grady sepulchraly, sitting bolt upright in her chair, and as it were increasing to gigantic proportions—we can't imagine how she did it, but it was very clever and thrilling and effective—"at the third groan," she repeated—"prepare for an awful tragedy: I would spare you the shock if I could, but I am bound to tell you the truth"—she really was working us up to a painful pitch of horror and excitement. "At the third groan," she repeated for the third time; and we began to wonder whether she was

making it up, and her inventive faculty had suddenly failed her—but no, it was only her way of proceeding. “At the third groan,” she said fourthly.

“Oh, do make it four groans,” cried E. impatiently and irreverently.

Miss O’Grady give her a scathing look—it was sufficient.

“At the *third* groan,” she repeated fifthly, “a horrible serpent reared its head, coiled itself round the white robe of the ghost, hissed in the most awful manner, spit fire from its eyes, lashed its tail and rattled its bones. The skeleton claws were stretched forth to clutch its victim’s throat; the white cotton night-cap in the fashion of the last century vibrated with suppressed eagerness; fire seemed to issue from the ghost’s skeleton mouth as it rattled its jaws up and down, and the victim had just expired in a paralysis of terror, when——”

But at this most thrilling crisis, the murmurs in the next room unfortunately ceased; there was a scraping of chairs.

A scream from E., a prolonged shudder and a fall back from Miss Sutherland, a look of baffled wonder and curiosity on our part, an expression of gratified delight at her histrionic powers on the part of Miss O’Grady, and the quartette had scarcely time to recover itself before the doctor had shown out his lady-patient and was seen advancing towards us with a low bow and hands outstretched.

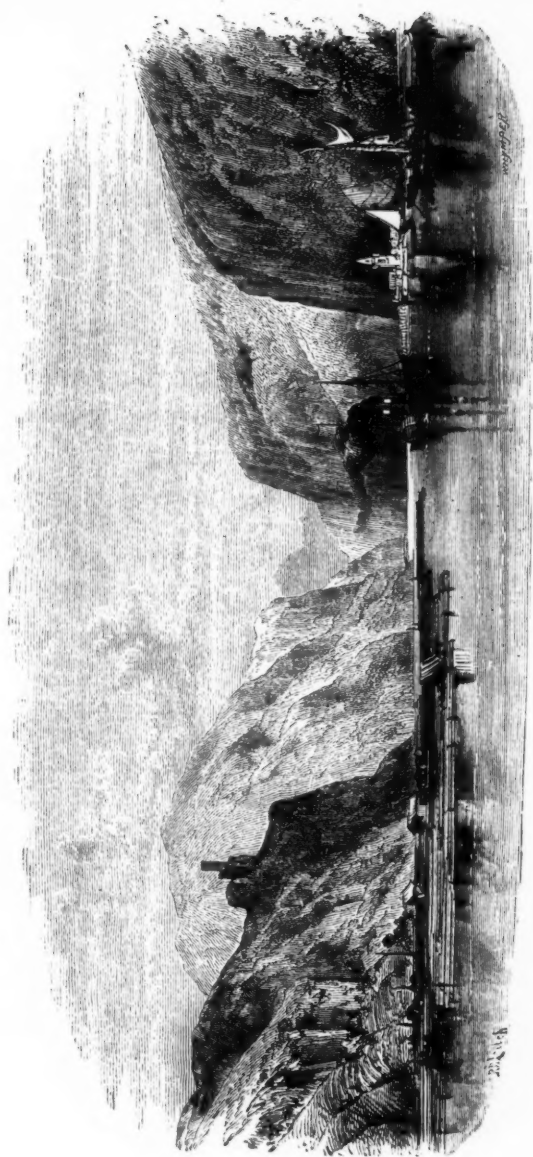
We too at once fell in love with him. What we saw was a small man of venerable appearance, who had already reached the allotted age, yet was still vigorous and active. He had a noble and beautiful face, with long white hair, and a head very intellectually developed. It was a head and face and expression that the old masters would have delighted in painting; and indeed he looked as though he had just descended from some old carved frame in an ancient panelled room. In this respect no one else in Kissingen could compare with him, and we congratulated ourselves on Dr. Cheadle’s wise recommendation.

We soon found that he spoke excellent English, but with some very quaint and highly amusing turns and expressions.

“My good friends,” he said, holding out his hands to the two ladies who had come to bid him farewell, “I am delighted to see you. And you bring me two more patients to take your place, who, I see, will be also my very good friends. And so you come to Kissingen to take the waters and the baths,” he continued to us; “you cannot do better. You come under advice, *nicht wahr?*”

“We are here by Dr. Cheadle’s orders,” we replied, laughing. “He did not recommend us to come; he simply ordered us. We had to obey.”

Dr. Diruf bowed, and gave one of his grave smiles, in which there still lurked something of humour. He spoke in a subdued, gentle tone, as unlike the usual German harsh and grating double bass as can possibly be conceived. It was a pleasure to talk to him, at all times, for he never varied. He must have been a lively and



RAFTS ON THE RHINE.

witty companion in earlier years, before unquenchable trouble came to his house, and a day arose when youthful voices that had once made the happiness of his life were silent for ever. His only son had died upon the battle-field. Then we understood the strange silence and stillness of the house.

"There is nothing like obedience in such a case," said the doctor with his grave smile. "Dr. Cheadle is a very wise man, and he also is my very good friend. I am always hoping to see him at Kissingen. Talks he of coming?"

Miss Sutherland insisted upon putting us in front of the battle; they would have their interviews lastly and separately. So we followed the doctor into his consulting room, and found him full of kindly sympathy, thoughtful suggestions, and minute instructions.

"Finally, after the bath," he said, "when you dress in, do so quickly. Then a sharp walk for twenty minutes; then go to bed for half an hour, well uncovered."

The latter injunction, however, we conveniently forgot; going to bed in the middle of the day was not at all in our line. There must be a point at which obedience stops short, just as there are crises in most lives when the world seems to cease to turn and everything has come to a standstill. At first we were a little puzzled by the expression "dress in," but soon discovered it simply meant putting on one's clothes.

Our own interviews over, there were the sad farewells to be uttered, and Miss Sutherland and Miss O'Grady went through their separate little dramatic episodes.

Miss O'Grady's was prolonged and, we felt sure, pathetic, and when she came forth, accompanied by the doctor, her eyes were very misty.

"But you will come next year," he said, patting her hand; "for everyone comes the second year; and the third if possible: and in the meanwhile I am sure you will conserve a pleasant souvenir of Kissingen."

"The baths are heavenly," murmured Miss O'Grady. "Never enjoyed anything as much in my life. It is like having a champagne bath."

"I never had a champagne bath," said the doctor mildly. "Do you have champagne baths in Ireland?"

Miss O'Grady was rather at a disadvantage.

"Well, I never had a champagne bath either," she confessed, after puzzling it out for a moment. "No, we don't have them in Ireland. We prefer to drink it; and I'm sorry to say a good many drink *too much*."

"That is bad," said the doctor. "Then should you tell them to come to Kissingen—for they will surely have gout. Champagne may be an agreeable wine, but for health it is an enemy of mankind. But I know what you mean about the baths. It is the bubbles that are always coming up, coming up; so that you feel as if you were in hot

sparkling soda water. Yes, that is most agreeable. It makes you feel exhilaration, only you take it in at the pores of the skin, instead of through the mouth. That is a much more wholesome way, and does not go to the brain. And now, my dear ladies, to our meeting next spring. You will come in the month of May. That is so good a month for Kissingen."

"Yes, yes," said Miss O'Grady, who was poetical and enthusiastic as well as emotional and impressionable. "The month of May; the merry, merry month of May; when all nature is one long draught of champagne"—champagne again!—"and the trees are bursting into fresh green leaf, and the birds are singing in the boughs; and the skies are fresh and blue, and we all feel young and buoyant. Ah, May is the time for nature, and May the age for humankind. Would we could be always May! But time like an ever rolling—"

"Bath of champagne," chimed in Miss Sutherland hurriedly, "lasts only twenty minutes, and then you have to dress in very quickly and take a brisk walk; and if we don't do likewise now, we shall never get through our one hundred and twenty-five farewells between now and Wednesday. Therefore, Dr. Diruf, it really and truly must be good-bye. I cannot tell you how sorry I am to say it, but it is useless prolonging the agony. Miss O'Grady would go on till to-morrow morning. It is charming to listen to her, but as she wisely observes, Time like an ever rolling stream—you know the rest; and we have much to do. I look forward to our meeting next year."

By this time the front door was open and we were out in the street, and as we went off and looked back we saw the doctor's beautiful face and long white hair framed in by his portico. He waved his hand comprehensively to us all, but specially to Miss O'Grady, and she waved back to him with an action full of sadness and appreciation (some people can be expressive even in the wave of a hand), and it took her quite to the end of the street to recover her usual elasticity of spirits.

"Now I have a proposal," she said. "We were interrupted in the most thrilling part of that ghost-story. What followed is awful to contemplate. It will make your flesh creep for a month. I suggest that to-night when it is quite dark, we come up to your room and with the candles all out, and nothing to cast the faintest shadow but the stars in the sky, I will give you the thrilling conclusion. I did it once before, and there was a nervous girl amongst those who listened to me; and——" She paused.

"And what happened to her?" asked Miss Sutherland.

"My dear," replied Miss O'Grady in the most complacent tones imaginable, "she went mad. But I always said there was madness in the family, and she would have gone mad anyhow. Besides which, I did good service. She was engaged to be married, and was no more fit to be married than I am; no, that's not it; I mean than

you are; no, that's not it either; we shall both make excellent wives when our time comes; I mean than the man in the moon. Just fancy the fate of that poor young man if he had found himself saddled with a mad wife for the rest of his days! Ah! there goes Princess Marie with her lovely dog," as a tall distinguished-looking woman passed up the Kurgarten dressed in white, holding a fine collie by a ribbon, that every now and then looked up into her face with almost human intelligence. "How very charming she looks, and how amiable! How I should like to tell her some of my ghost-stories. I wonder if she cares for ghost-stories? I think everyone more or less loves the supernatural. The mysterious and unfathomable, the unseen and uncertain, must always carry their own fascination. I always say give me a creepy crawly story when I'm depressed. Heigho! Away with melancholy while time is on the wing! Those old songs, how they take hold of one's heart! My dear Miss Sutherland, did you ever hear me sing 'Gin a body meet a body'? No? Well, then, the loss is yours. Why there's the Hotel de Russie, right in front of us! And there as usual is the head-waiter sunning himself at the door *en grand seigneur*. Oh that two pair of stairs that we have to go up! It was absolute manslaughter on the part of the proprietor not to have the lift ready for the beginning of the season. Oh! and there goes her Excellency!" as a remarkable and aristocratic old lady passed down the avenue towards the springs. "What can she want there at this time of day?"

But we cannot introduce her Excellency at the end of a paper. Space and courtesy both compel postponement of the subject. We went into the hotel and passed up to our charming rooms on the third floor, where Rosa was on the watch to act as E.'s lady's-maid; whilst Miss Sutherland and Miss O'Grady went back towards the town and entered upon the round of one hundred and twenty-five farewell visits which had to be gone through by Wednesday morning.

---



## DEAD SEA FRUIT.

BY LADY MARGARET MAJENDIE.

## CHAPTER I.

ALL the pupils had finished their afternoon's work at Calleone's studio in the Via dell Condottiere at Florence, and as they trooped out of the wide doorway their loud young voices made a rush of noisy vitality all down the street.

Two only of the company remained behind, a man and a girl. Calleone himself came out of his inner room with a huge black cloak thrown across his chest and over his shoulder, and as he passed, tossed the key to his favourite pupil, saying, kindly and with some significance :

"Lock up as you pass out, Giglio mine, and give the key to Sandro—and—good luck to you." He disappeared.

"It is growing late," said the girl; "I must not keep Maddalena waiting."

"Maddalena, your maid! Where is she?" said Giglio absently.

"With Sandro at the porter's house," answered the girl, fastening on her hat and gathering together her few properties. "Well, good-bye, Signor Giglio; we shall not meet until next week, on Calleone's next ladies' day."

She was moving away, when Giglio suddenly put out his hand; his handsome young face was white as death.

"Cristina," he said, "wait. I have at last the right to speak—I have fulfilled the condition you imposed upon me."

"Yes," said Cristina composedly; "you have won the medal."

She stood leaning back against the tall marble base of one of Calleone's largest groups, her hands behind her, and as she spoke she looked up at the tall figure beside her. She was very lovely, small and slightly made, her face the colourless ivory of the South, lit up by a pair of magnificent dark eyes under very thick brows; but the expression of the mouth, in spite of its exquisite curves and rose-colour, was strangely obstinate.

"You have won the medal," she repeated.

"And you promised——"

"Yes, I promised to listen to you when you succeeded, but this success is not so very much, is it?"

"Is it not enough, Cristina? It means, at all events, that I stand first among Calleone's pupils. Is that nothing?"

She hesitated a moment, then said slowly in a gentle voice :

"Giglio, I do not think you understand me. I also am an artist

and I have ambition. I can produce nothing myself—what can a woman do? The first lessons Calleo gave me showed me my limitations; so I ask of my husband what I cannot obtain myself—success——” She paused a moment, and then added—“and fame.”

“The first I can offer you,” said Giglio humbly; “the second may come some day. I have ideals, and I have gifts of fortune which should enable me to carry them out; but, Cristina, my beautiful, my noble Cristina, I have more to give you than that. What is wealth or success, or fame itself, compared to such love as I have to offer you?”

“To me they are worth much more,” said Cristina. “Love, love—you all talk of love. I want glory!”

“And that also I will give you, you beautiful, cold-hearted child!” cried Giglio passionately. “Your ambitions, your inspirations, will inspire my hand, and force me to do great work. Do not be afraid—you shall have your laurels.”

Cristina stood silent for a long minute; then she put out her hands clasped together, and for the first time something childish, something womanly, softened her great dark eyes.

“I will trust you and will be your wife, but——” With a swift movement she checked his impulsive gesture. “But remember this, Giglio: I do it because you give more promise of success than any of the others, and some day—you see what you have done already is only promise, not fulfilment—some day the world may call you Maestro. Giglio, Giglio, without this I shall not be happy—make me happy if you can!”

“I will work for you, slave for you, my queen, my inspiration!”

Giglio clasped her in his arms; all his hopes were to be realised; and as he rejoiced in his great joy no misgiving crossed his mind, whispering to him that the woman who bargains for her own happiness alone, is ignorant of love or cold as ice.

As the betrothed pair and their swarthy attendant, Maddalena, walked home through the darkening streets, Giglio's heart sang for joy.

## CHAPTER II.

HIGH up among the Tuscan Hills, surrounded by slopes of olive trees, stood the fine old country house of the de Pauli family. It was a great stone building with huge overhanging roofs, and at its feet broad stone terraces descended like giant steps to a garden almost unsurpassed in Italy for the beauty of its flowers.

The place had descended in the same family for many generations, but the family had gradually dwindled down to one solitary representative, Contessa Gemma de Pauli, an unmarried lady past seventy years of age.

Donna Gemma was the last survivor of many brothers and sisters, and she was very poor. She had always been an unimportant member

of the family, so that she had seen nothing of life. She had scarcely been more than a few miles away from home, and was perfectly contented with a small horizon and the narrowest traditions.

When the last of the brothers, Count Ugo, died, Donna Gemma depended entirely upon the advice of her man of business, in whose hands everything had been placed. This gentleman, Signor Franconi, made a suggestion so bold that the old lady fairly gasped for breath, but nevertheless she adopted it.

It was no more nor less than to let the greater part of her house, and to reduce her own establishment to two faithful women.

Donna Gemma was enchanted with the result of her tremendous undertaking, for the money flowed in, and she found herself not only comfortable, but rich—able to help her peasants as she had never done before.

The tenants whom Signor Franconi had found and established in her house were good ones. The place was within a few hours' drive from Florence and most convenient for artists who wished to leave the town during the heat of summer and yet did not wish to go very far.

The ground floor of the old house was let to the sculptor Giglio Santeodoro and his young wife Cristina; they had been married about three years.

The ground floor was divided into several large rooms surrounding a centre hall which opened on a wide arcade and broad terrace. The rooms were very lofty, somewhat scantily furnished, with stiff gilded chairs and couches covered with yellow silk and damask. The walls were hung with the same stuff, which might once have been too bright, but had now faded to a delicious yellow, full of the sunshine of ages.

Enormous candelabra of twisted Venetian glass and delicate leaves of dark ormolu decorated the walls, and were reflected in the polished marble floors.

The furthest of these rooms was converted into a sculptor's studio. The light was not very good, being partially darkened by the arcade on the southern side, but the east windows were enormously tall and only scantily draped with soft white cotton curtains.

Giglio Santeodoro did not mean to do much work in the country. He had been working all the winter, and wanted rest, he said. But he was a rich man, and he carried all the paraphernalia of art about with him.

He was standing in his studio one gorgeous evening in June gazing at his unfinished work on a pedestal in the middle of the room, and the expression on his face was one of doubt and misgiving.

The statue was that of a woman draped in classic robes, but somehow the folds looked artificial, the arms were out of drawing.

"After all," said Giglio, half aloud, "tastes differ, and I for one have always admired the massive. What can be wrong with the face?"

Surely it is beautiful? The brows are level, the nose is straight, the mouth has the true curves. What can be wrong?"

Giglio was a handsome fellow, tall and well proportioned, with jet black hair brushed backwards and a long moustache. His dress was covered by a sculptor's smock, delicately embroidered where the open collar displayed his fine brown throat.

The tall window was pushed open somewhat abruptly, and his young wife came in from the terrace.

Giglio made a bound to meet her—he was deeply in love with her.

Cristina stood for a moment on the threshold looking in, and the background of the picture was very beautiful.

The terrace with grey stone balustrades was decorated with orange and lemon trees in tubs, standing up dark against a far-stretching view of Tuscan, olive-clad hills and valleys full of transparent mist, and everything, from the bold foliage and fruit of orange-trees to the far-off distance, was steeped in the after-glow, a tender rose-colour which, as it passed through the mist, changed to the delicate hue of pale amethyst.

Giglio looked at his wife and rejoiced in the beauty of the picture.

Cristina did not speak to him at first; she looked past him to the work in the centre of the room, and her young face changed. It was as if the light died out of it, the soft lips closed into a hard straight line, and the eyes narrowed curiously.

Giglio saw; it was as if the change in her face struck him like a blow, the colour faded from his cheek, he shivered a little. He went up to the statue and began to speak rapidly.

"See, Cristina! It advances, does it not? There is something noble in the face, something of the high ideal which inspired me when I first meditated on a statue of Liberty."

Cristina shook her head scornfully.

"What have you done to it?" she exclaimed. "The head looks bigger than ever."

"I myself like the massive," said Giglio quickly.

"But so massive a head could scarcely be supported on a neck like that of a crane," said Cristina, laughing.

Her laugh cut Giglio to the heart.

"You are impatient!" he cried. "It is not finished or even far advanced, and yet you expect perfection at once!"

"No doubt I am unreasonable," said Cristina shortly, and she threw herself into a chair.

Giglio walked slowly backwards from his work.

"Tastes differ," he murmured.

"Come and sit down, Giglio," exclaimed his wife impatiently; "I want to show you something."

"You look at it in a wrong light, Cristina," said Giglio. "Look, if it would not trouble you too much, just from this point of view;

you will see that the position in which I placed the arm exactly represents what I most desired to express, the fatigue and lassitude of success."

"I am tired," she answered; "my lassitude is greater than that of your Liberty."

He sighed, but came rapidly to the sofa on which she had thrown herself and sat down by her.

"Always at your command, my beloved," he murmured.

"Look at this, Giglio; I brought it for you to see."

She held up before him a carving in wood, which she had been carrying in one hand. It was the figure of a young goatherd scantily clad in the skin of one of his hairy flock; it was exquisitely modelled, the young lean figure showed every muscle with a truth which did not hurt its delicate beauty. It was a little gem, and might have been the work of Donatello.

"It is charming—quite charming!" exclaimed Giglio. "Surely it is an antique! Where did you find it?"

"It is not an antique," said Cristina, rather sullenly. "It is the work of a living genius."

"Somebody has imposed on you, Carina. There is no one here who could do like this."

"But there is!" she exclaimed, stamping her foot. "There is a poor country man living in this place, in Donna Gemma's woodyard—a hunchback—and this is his work!"

"But it is wonderful—it is astounding!" cried Giglio. "I am glad you have discovered him; next to the pleasure of doing good work oneself is that of being patron to unrecognized genius."

Cristina turned full round and looked at him with her great dark eyes. Something in their expression made him wince uneasily. She saw it, and spoke with slow cruelty.

"Patron, Giglio? This village hunchback is already your master."

Giglio bit his lips hard, then suddenly a smile of rare sweetness broke like sunshine over his dark face.

"Carina," he said, "I should be but a poor artist if I did not accept the fact that at any time genius may be my master."

She sprang to her feet, and anger and disappointment long pent up against him broke out suddenly. She flung her hands out towards the half-finished statue, and her voice, beginning low, became loud and shrill.

"Look at it!" she exclaimed. "Look at that monstrosity! Are you not ashamed to show it as your work? When I married you, you held the grand medal in Calleone's school! I listened to your words about your visions and your ideals. And, fool that I was, I believed in them. I believed in you! I foresaw my ambitions fulfilled, that I should be the wife of a Maestro. I worship genius, I live upon success. What do I care for the paltry fortune which ensures me luxury? I would live in a garret on bread and water,

gladly, to know that your hand had created *this*, not the caricature yonder which makes my cheeks burn with shame ! ”

“ Cristina ! ”

“ Let me alone. I have been deceived. Why did Calleone tell us lies ? Why did you pretend to be what you are not ? ”

“ Before Heaven I did not ! ” cried Giglio suddenly. “ My diploma work was honest work, honestly rewarded, and you know it. ”

“ I know that there is no limit to what fools will buy, if there are fools enough to supply the market. ”

But Giglio’s patience was exhausted ; he turned upon her with such rage gleaming in his fierce eyes that she shrank back with a cry.

“ Dare to say another word ! ” he shouted.

She slipped past the hand he put forth to detain her, and dashed to the window again.

“ Coward ! ” she exclaimed. “ Go, put yourself to school, learn from a *contadino* ! ” And she disappeared.

Giglio pulled himself together. The blood was surging in his veins, his teeth clenched. He flung himself into a chair and leant his arms on a table, hiding his face, the quivering of the muscles of his lithe dark limbs and sinewy hands betrayed the force he put upon himself.

Many minutes passed, when he was brought back to the ordinary things of life by the sound of a soft footfall crushing the gravel outside and a gentle knock at the window.

He lifted his bloodshot eyes and looked up. The knock was repeated, and then quietly pushing the window open a man stepped into the room.

“ At your service, Signor Maestro, ” he said, in a curiously musical deep voice.

Giglio rose heavily to his feet as if all spring had gone out of him.

“ Do not call me Maestro, ” he said hoarsely ; “ I am no Maestro, but a failure ! ”

“ When a man is beautiful as a young god, and Heaven has made him so, he cannot talk of failure. ”

Giglio glanced at the speaker and understood. The man before him was quite young, certainly not older than himself, and he was deformed—slightly hunchback—his dark, thin face was sunk between his black shoulders. The eyes were long and narrow, a thick shock of heavy hair hung low over his brows, the mouth was large and somewhat projecting, with mobile sensitive lips betraying the highly-strung, nervous organisation.

Giglio raised his arms passionately.

“ Can anything make up for such a failure as that ? ” he cried.

“ Oh, yes, ” said the man softly ; “ life is long, and the signor padrone is very young. ”

“ You are young also, my friend, ” said Giglio. “ Who are you ? ”

“ I am Gian Battista Martino, at your service. Your lady came



to my woodyard. She had the goodness to admire a little figure, a mere nothing that I had carved. See—there it is!”

He took up the little goatherd from the table.

“It is a pretty thing,” said Giglio. “How did you learn to carve?”

“I have always done it,” said Gian. “And once I had a place in Calleone’s studio and the gentlemen would let me have bits of clay; but the wages were low, and I heard of the woodyard here. It seemed to be Heaven’s will, so I came. I carve when I can, but I have little time to spare, and I am not strong.”

“I should like to see you work,” said Giglio suddenly. “I should like to see you handle clay.”

“I have not touched it lately,” said Gian eagerly; “but if the signor padrone permits——”

“Take what you want,” said Giglio. “See—do this for me. I have in my house in Florence an old marble chimney-piece. The centre is wanting. Model me an eagle with expanded wings for that centre. Let it be in high relief, fifteen inches in height. Does the idea please you?”

Gian drew off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. He went rapturously towards a board on which was placed a tempting mass of fine clay.

Giglio threw himself back in his chair and shut his eyes. The reaction from the violence of his rage was setting in, and he was tired out.

Gian worked silently, and Giglio’s bitter reverie was uninterrupted. Always before him he saw Cristina’s scornful little face, and the cruel words stung him like a whip. He writhed under them, his very love for her sharpened the sting, his pride, his self-esteem, his manhood were dragged low. The pain became intolerable and a moan escaped him.

He rose to his feet, shook himself, and went up to Gian.

“Bravo—bravo!” he exclaimed suddenly.

The thin dark fingers were working with rapid boldness and certainty of touch which amazed him. The eagle’s wings were outspread, the claws were blocked out clinging round a ledge, the head was turned sideways and forwards, and already in the rough there was a force, a wild fierceness which caught to the life the tameless strength of the king of birds. Giglio cried “Bravo!” with the generosity of a true artist.

“Ah, my friend,” he exclaimed, “if you could teach me that touch of yours!”

“It comes from Heaven,” said Gian, with bent brows, as he worked on rapidly.

Giglio spoke suddenly.

“Are you poor, my friend?”

“As a Franciscan, at your service.”

"Are you alone in the world?"

"I support my mother, and I work for my *promessa*."

"Ah, you have a *promessa*. Who is she? Is she pretty?"

"She is called Nanna. She washes for *vossignoria*. Pretty? Yes."

"Women are false."

"Ah, but as to that, so are we, signor padrone."

"Leave it alone, Gian. It is full of genius."

"The signor padrone flatters me, but I obey, for it grows late, and I have work to finish."

"I will see you again to-morrow, my friend. Meanwhile, what will you take for this work that you have done?"

"For that! It is nothing—nothing! Your own clay. For the goatherd, sixty francs."

"It is mine. You shall have the money when I see you to-morrow," said Giglio.

Gian went away sorrowfully.

"He is in great trouble, the poor fellow," he said to himself.

"But what can it be? What can trouble mean to one made like a young god?"

Giglio left alone paced up and down the studio with a black frown on his face.

### CHAPTER III.

It was some hours later when Cristina came into the studio again. She had changed her dress for one her husband liked, a long white gown with golden edges and belt. A servant had brought in lamps, and as she came in timidly she looked very pretty in the rather dim light.

Cristina was frightened and sorry—both at once—like a child. She had often taunted and sneered at her husband, but to-day the sight of Gian Martino's work had driven her almost mad with jealousy, and she had gone too far. She had never seen that white look of furious anger in his face before and she was frightened.

She crept into the studio on tip-toe, wondering how she should find Giglio, what he would be doing, how he would greet her, and her heart beat fast.

Giglio was seated astride on a chair, with his elbows on the back and his face hidden between his hands; just in front of him was the clay model of the eagle. He did not hear his wife come in, and was so absorbed in his own painful thoughts that she was standing close to him and had placed her hand on his shoulder before he was aware of her presence.

"That is fine—that is spirited, Giglio!" exclaimed Cristina as her eyes fell on Gian's work. "I had no idea that you could——"

She stopped, for he sprang to his feet, his dark eyes flaming.

"No!" he exclaimed. "You had no idea that the miserable failure you are forced to call husband could do anything. By Heaven, I swear you shall find out your mistake! I am master, and I refuse to be rated as if I were your slave. To-morrow I return to Florence. You may send for your sister to bear you company, for I myself will never return to you again until all Europe rings with my fame."

She cowered before his anger.

"Giglio, Giglio," she cried, "you do not mean it! You will not leave me!"

"It is your own doing. I have been very patient. I have even pleaded with you for forbearance; but that shall never be again. Flesh and blood will not endure what you have said to me. After all, I am a man. It is over now."

She flung herself on her knees and clasped him, but he thrust her from him, and with a low cry she fell forward, but she dragged herself up again.

"You are mad!" she exclaimed. "What have I done that you should treat me like this? Is it my fault? Am I to blame if I have set my heart on your success? Have I not cause for disappointment? Is it not rather the excess of my very love for you which is the cause of all?"

"Love!" exclaimed Giglio. "If that is woman's love, God save me from the curse of owning it!"

"You can say nothing worse than that," cried Cristina, her face growing absolutely livid. "Coward! I have not deserved this."

Giglio seized her hands and drew her towards him.

"It is for your own sake that I leave you," he hissed through his clenched teeth—"for your sake; for I have borne all that I can bear! One is not always master of oneself."

She was terrified.

"Giglio, are you mad?"

"Yes; and you have made me so!"

"Giglio! When will you come back?"

"I have told you, and I never break my word."

"That will never be."

Her voice rose to a wild cry. She strove to catch hold of him again, to compel him to listen, but in vain; he put her aside and was gone.

For a moment Cristina fell back stunned and motionless, then she sprang to her feet, clenched her teeth hard, and put back the tangled hair from her eyes. The expression on her face was so terrified that if only Giglio had allowed himself to look at her, he would have gathered her into his arms like a child and expended all his tenderness in a passionate wish to comfort her; but he had been driven too far, and was beside himself.

Giglio was a bad sculptor, but he was an artist to the finger-tips; he had an artist's passion for beauty and perfection, an artist's

sensitiveness which had become developed by his own lack of skill to a morbid extent.

When his young wife first began to criticise and then to upbraid him, it needed the greatest self-control to hide his feelings; and his very success in so doing was his worst misfortune, for she, with her narrow want of understanding, thought him callous, and went further.

He strove for a time to stop her by caresses, and these provoked instead of conciliating her, and she did not know with what edged tools she was playing.

Now when the crisis had come, the realisation of what she had done terrified her. What was to become of her? What could have happened to Giglio? she said to herself. Could this indeed be her Giglio, with whom she thought she could do just as she chose—this angry, masterful man the husband whom she had always looked upon with a little contempt, a little touch of patronage, all the more so for the great love he had laid at her feet so lavishly? What should she do?

She rushed upstairs suddenly, flinging the door open. Cristina had not been very long at Castel de Pauli, but she had been there long enough to know that in Donna Gemma she would find a true friend, one whose mercy would never fail. With hands cold as ice, and her little face so drawn and blanched with fear that she was hardly recognisable, Cristina took refuge with her old friend.

It was a very peaceful scene upon which she burst in her strong young agony.

A large room with grey walls on which a deep border was stencilled in shades of brown and yellow. The floor was of polished stone; a square carpet made an oasis near the middle of the room, on which was placed a round marble table surrounded by six tall gilt chairs, and a brass brazier as big as a large sponge bath. On the table stood a tall brass lamp, books, and an embroidery frame. In one of the gilt chairs sat Donna Gemma, busy with her bundle of crude green and crimson silks. There was nothing distinctively handsome in her features; her gray hair was smoothly parted under a black lace kerchief, and her dark, soft eyes shone in a pale, finely-wrinkled face. There was something about her so overflowing with love and kindness that children instinctively nestled to her, everyone in sorrow or trouble rushed to her, everything noisy or angry calmed and repented in her presence.

It was to this strong rock of comfort that the terrified girl flew, flinging herself on her knees and burying her face in her old friend's lap, while the hot tears poured like rain.

Donna Gemma opened her arms and drew her into them, rocking her gently as her own mother might have done, and when the sobs had begun to subside a little she caressed her lovingly. Donna Gemma was shocked at the sight of Cristina's face and the sharp shudders which ran through her slight frame. She sent for a cup of

coffee and made her drink it, and then, holding her hands very closely, she began to ask :

"My child, my child, put me out of anxiety ! What has happened to you ?"

"Giglio has left me !" she cried wildly. "He has gone. He will never, never come back again."

"Ah !" said Donna Gemma sorrowfully. "Then his patience has broken down at last."

"What shall I do ?" sobbed Cristina. "I am ready to kneel and implore his pardon, but he will not hear me. He will not listen."

"Where has he gone ?"

"I do not know. He has sworn that he will never see me again until—until——"

"Until when ?" said Donna Gemma anxiously.

"Until all Europe rings with his fame."

"He said that ? Heaven help you, my poor child !"

"And that will never, never be. How can it ? He is not clever, he will never be a great Maestro. But though his work may be bad, I do not care now. Oh, help me—help me ! I do not care now. I only want my Giglio."

"Ah, child, if you had ever said that to him, all this would never have been."

Cristina positively writhed. Every cruel word, every sharp taunt she had ever used, came back to her as if scorched in upon her brain.

"Oh, I am sorry—I am sorry !" she sobbed.

For a moment Donna Gemma wrestled with herself ; it was a strong temptation to remind this unhappy girl how often she had warned her. But no comfort was ever given yet by the observation, "I told you so." So she forbore, but she positively grew sick and pale when she recalled to mind the hunted look she had seen often of late in Giglio's great dark eyes, the toneless voice that sounded as if spirit and hope were extinct after one of those scenes with his wife.

Donna Gemma saw, but could scarcely believe in the narrow denseness of mind which could not understand that the art-failure in itself was a bitter punishment, without the aggravation of taunts and reproaches from the one best loved on earth.

"Poor Giglio !" she exclaimed involuntarily. "I thought that his love would have prevailed."

"What shall I do ?" sobbed Cristina.

Then Donna Gemma kissed her again.

"You must be patient, my child," she said very sadly—"very gentle, very patient ; he will come back some day. He will not be able to live long without his little wife."

"Oh, but you did not see him ! He was so angry, he will never, never, forgive me."

"Yes, yes, in time. He will be good, he will come back—he

must come back!" she repeated, alarmed by the convulsive sobbing of poor Cristina.

She rang for her maid Marta at last, for Cristina became hysterical, and between them they got her down-stairs and to bed, and the two kind women sat by her through the night, watching her short snatches of uneasy sleep, and comforting the paroxysms of grief when she awoke.

Days and weeks passed, but Giglio never came home.

#### CHAPTER IV.

It was night and the silver moon flooded the great Val d'Arno. The purple sky—for its velvety darkness was more purple than black—was glorious with magnificent stars.

The house in which Gian Martino and his old mother, Colomba, lived, was built in one of the lower vineyards of Castel del Pauli. It was a picturesque looking house, the centre portion of which rose high like a square tower. An open *loggia*, or gallery, gave a wide view over the valley in the distance, and over the woodyard beneath.

To the dark beams of the *loggia* roof hung sheaves of Indian corn, the splendid orange-coloured grain ripening under shelter; strings of glossy onions and great golden gourds were there also, and down below a bed of vegetable marrows was one glorious tangle of large leaves and orange trumpet-shaped flowers.

Before going to bed Gian came out upon the *loggia* and stood with folded arms looking upon the night. The moonlight fell in a sheet on the floor, blackly cross-barred by the shadows of the slender pillars which supported the roof. Gian's strange face was in light, it was hardened and made stern by strong contrasts of light and shadows; but, stern as he looked, his heart was soft within him; he was thinking of Giglio's face, wondering what caused the suffering he had seen in it.

Presently he began to sing in the mellow voice Italians have in the heart of Italy, "*Io son Lindoro*."

"After all," he said half aloud, "what can a poor hunchback do? I have troubles enough of my own."

He stopped suddenly, for a little handful of gravel rattled about him, and a voice from below called to him in low tones.

"Gian! Gian Martino!"

"Who is it?" said Gian, leaning over the balustrade and peering down into the shadows.

"It is I, Giglio Santeodoro. I wish to speak to you at once—but secretly, secretly, my friend."

"At your service!" exclaimed Gian. "Will *Vossignoria* wait one moment? I will come down and let him in. As for secrecy, my mother alone is in the house, and she is deaf, stone deaf, and asleep besides."



He had descended and opened the door as he spoke.

The moonlight shone on Giglio. In spite of the heat of the night, he had a great cloak on, the end of which was flung over his shoulder, concealing the lower part of his face.

"I do not wish to be seen," he said, throwing it off as he stepped inside. "You are sure that we can talk privately."

"As if in a tomb," said Gian. "Come up into the *loggia*—there are seats there, and the sight of Heaven is beautiful to-night."

He led the way into the *loggia*. Giglio glanced at the glorious moonlit view, but he was too much preoccupied to think of it.

"Do you smoke?" he said abruptly.

"*Per Bacco*, when I can get a cigar like this!" said Gian, accepting it.

The two men smoked for a few minutes, then Giglio broke the silence.

"Gian," he said, "you tell me you are poor."

"I am poor," said he slowly. "But Madonna be praised—I have work."

"But when a man's work is unworthy of him, can he be content?"

"I have never thought my work unworthy of me," said Gian simply. "It is very hard certainly, but that it is so hard to me is only my misfortune; my infirmity is the will of God."

"But," said Giglio, "have you never realised that you have talent; bah, that you have genius?"

"I have a certain facility—yes."

"No," exclaimed Giglio feverishly. "It is not only that—it is genius! You might be a great sculptor."

Gian went on smoking, then he took the cigar from between his lips and said gravely, "It would be better to say no more."

"But why? Should I not be doing a great good to my country by awakening one of her most choice geniuses?"

"Say no more—let it rest for the sake of charity! I have no time for speculation. I am what you see—deformed. I should take thankfully the regular work that I can do, and not waste my time in fanciful visions."

Giglio was silent for a few moments, then he leaned forward, knocked the ash off the end of his cigar and began again.

"Gian, if I could offer you an employment which would double your wages, would you take it?"

"Maria Santissima, would I not! It has been a great trouble to me that I do not earn enough to put by. With something over I could make a permanent provision for my mother."

"I have a story to tell you, Gian—the story of my life. Will you be patient?"

"The story of your life will be deeply interesting to me, signor padrone!" said Gian affectionately.

Giglio rose and seated himself sideways on the balustrade, lea

against one of the pillars. He did not know it, but the attitude brought his face into the moonlight. Gian, leaning back in the darkness, saw every line in it, and his eyes filled with tears.

"My father was a painter," said Giglio. "You know his pictures perhaps? He died very young—he was not more than three or four and thirty, but he is well known to fame. He called himself Niccolo Zanti. I see—you know all about him! Zanti was his second name. We lived among artists; I was brought up among them. My mother also was an artist—she was *prima donna assoluta* at the Scala when she married my father. She was a good wife, but, alas for me, she died also when I most needed her."

He paused. The moon went under a cloud, and it became very dark. Giglio's voice through the darkness sounded low and hoarse.

"Gian, the artist blood was in me, and I dreamed high dreams of the Ideal. I loved all that was great, I gloried in beauty. Symmetry of form was poetry to me. To my finger-tips I felt myself an artist. Have you ever seen any of my work?"

Gian did not answer at once—he was wondering what he could say.

"You need not hesitate," cried Giglio bitterly. "Do not tell me a polite lie. You have seen it and condemned it."

"Life is long," murmured Gian, "and you are young."

"Pshaw!"

There was a pause, then Giglio began again—

"Listen, Gian, I am too good an artist to be deceived. I know what is good, but I produce what is bad, and what can I do? I tried accuracy by measurement, everything to scale. The work was lifeless. I cast away instruments and worked by rule of thumb. I worked with a perfect ideal in my brain. I saw it develop under my touch. I believed that the clay conveyed to others what it conveyed to me; but Gian, Gian, if I left my work to dine, when I returned the illusion was gone. I saw my work as others saw it, and, God help me! I learned the depth of my humiliation from the sneer on the lips of my wife."

"But one must maintain authority over one's women," said Gian gently. "You should not have allowed it."

"It is better to know the truth, my friend. Better to go through life with a broken heart than to exist as a laughing-stock to others. My illusions were dispelled."

"But," said Gian eagerly, "have you studied enough? If the inspiration is there, surely the technique can be acquired."

Giglio sighed heavily.

"I have worked," he said.

"I am very sorry for you," said Gian slowly; "but at least, if you have to give it up, you have other blessings—wealth, a young wife, youth, beauty, and strength."

"You do not know all!" exclaimed Giglio passionately. "I have sworn that I will never return to my wife until I have established my reputation—until all Europe rings with my fame."

Gian shrugged his shoulders; he had all the peasant's contempt for women.

"I do not understand you," he said earnestly. "No woman is worth the suffering that I see in your face, or indeed the authority of a husband would go for nothing."

"If you do not understand," said Giglio hoarsely, "you have never loved."

Gian again shrugged his shoulders.

"But apart from love, Gian, you do not know the effect that is produced upon a man by an atmosphere of scorn and contempt."

In the darkness Gian's sensitive face quivered, and he clenched his hands hard; he understood too well, but he said nothing, and Giglio went on.

"It withers your energy, it destroys your self-respect, it saps the very root of life. I bore it as long as I could, and now it has come to an end. I can bear no more!"

He covered his face with his hands, and his voice sank.

"Gian, I can never go back to her, except as a Maestro, never until my own conditions are fulfilled."

"Dear signore," said Gian, and he laid his hand on the arm of his companion, "believe me, it is not worth it."

"But you do not understand. I love her. Heaven above, how I love her! I must win her back to me or die!"

"But," said the saw-cutter hesitatingly, "what do you propose to do? It is not easy to acquire such fame as you desire."

"There is one way."

There was another long pause. Gian could hear his companion breathing heavily.

"You are very poor," said Giglio slowly. "You would willingly increase your income?"

"Yes," said Gian; then quietly—"Honestly, of course."

"Of course—of course! What I propose to you is honest enough for you—an honest bargain. Sell me your genius!"

"Work for you, work in your employ? Do you mean simply that?"

"No," cried Giglio—"it means more. I buy of you, not your work only, but its reward. You will work for me, and I shall take the credit and the fame!"

Gian sprang to his feet and flung out his hands.

"I do not understand you!" he cried. "Great Heaven, do you understand yourself? What you propose is a fraud."

"Just so. What I propose is a fraud."

Gian covered his face with his hands.

Giglio steadied his voice and spoke in a mechanical way, as if he had learnt his speech by heart.

"You are poor, but I am rich. The fraud will be mine, not yours. It is a fair bargain on your part. I buy your work and your name. If I make use of them as mine, the crime is mine, not yours. I offer you five thousand francs a year."

Gian shuddered.

"Let me think—let me think!" he exclaimed.

Giglio went on.

"You are not ambitious! You are satisfied with earning a good income. You lose nothing and gain comparative wealth."

"Is it nothing to risk one's soul?" cried Gian.

Giglio made an impatient movement.

"I tell you again that risk is mine only. Listen; it will not always be easy. We must live at Florence and work together in my studio; we shall not quarrel, but I tell you it will not always be easy, for the work you will produce will be very fine, and I only shall reap the reward."

"And for this you offer only five thousand francs?" said Gian sullenly.

Giglio started, and smiled bitterly. He had not expected this sordid view of the transaction.

His own words had astonished Gian—he had not meant to drive a harder bargain—he had only meant to express the feeling that no gain was worth the sacrifice of all that his genius might achieve.

Both the two men as they put the plan into words deteriorated. The money temptation pressed fearfully on the overworked Gian, and the vista of congenial work dazzled him. Giglio found himself rejoicing in the sordid speech of his friend; it knocked away his belief in his superiority to himself, and he answered in the tone of one who clenches a bargain.

"I will make it ten thousand—no more!"

"I cannot answer at once," said Gian. "I must have time."

"Take your time," said Giglio, striking a match and lighting a fresh cigar with a shaking hand. "If you agree to my offer, give up your work here and come to my studio in Florence on this day week."

"Remember," cried Gian, "I have not promised yet!"

"I have given you a week," said Giglio coldly.

*(To be continued.)*



## THE BULWARK AND ITS HUMOURS.

SAID Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night*, "They have been Grand Jurymen before Noah was a sailor;" and although we know not upon what authority he made this astounding statement, we have no hesitation in guaranteeing that in the event of a jury having been empanelled on the Ark, on the list being read over, one or more of the jurymen summoned asked to be exempt: for the habit has so become a part of the jurymen's nature as not merely to justify Sir Toby's announcement, but by Darwinian methods to suggest that the first jurymen was on good terms with the Megatherium, and hail-fellow-well-met (as far as the reptile was concerned) with the Ichthyosaurus.

To every rule there is an exception; and doubtless there are persons who joyfully look forward to the happy day when they will be called upon to do their duty and justify the statement put forward by the authors of the Magna Charta, who insisted so strenuously that juries were the bulwark of the people's liberty.

Such a one was a certain Louis Ellis, who cheerfully answered "Here," when the roll was called at a City Court early this year. Twice was the roll of fourteen names read out, and twice did the fourteen items of the Bulwark answer to their names, though perchance not all so cheerfully as did Louis Ellis. Once again was the list recited, whilst the fourteen wondered—as indeed did the reader, and well he might—for thirteen men answered to fourteen surnames, and "contempt" seemed rampant.

Eventually it was discovered that Louis Ellis was a woman, and a justly enraged woman too, when told that her name was not "Louis Ellis," and that her services were not required. Said the fair jury-woman to the officer: "You said, 'Louis Ellis lives here?' and I told you 'Yes,' and you handed me the paper." And when the officer, having got all the worst of the encounter, repeated that she need not stay, she retorted: "Oh, don't think I want to serve. I've been blessing this job of having to come and waste my time instead of cooking my dinner!" And yet we think from her protestations that Louis was just a little disappointed that she was not allowed to sit—as indeed was the juror who heard his name read out about eighteen months ago with the corollary that no answer was expected as the gentleman was dead. Contrary to public expectations there was a most decided answer; but notwithstanding the "deceased's" statement that he was very much alive—which the Court admitted—he was not called upon to serve, though he had come from the country on purpose. Doubtless he left its precincts saying, apropos of the disappointment in his heart, in the words of Juliet: "Oh, that

deceit should dwell in so gorgeous a palace!"—if the City of London Court can so be described.

Sometimes, when holidays are rampant, the pleas for exemption become so numerous that the jury-box is quite bereft of its usual occupants; but it is when the jurymen appears in person with his excuse that laughter fills the court.

Some time ago, on a name being called, a fellow-jurymen replied, "He's living in the same house as I am. He's been dead about twelve months," which sounded Irish. "That's not true," added another. "He's in the mad-house. Wouldn't he be glad to be here!" Sometimes, alas, we are afraid he is.

On another occasion, when a jurymen pleaded deafness, a question was put to him in quite a low tone, to which a ready reply was forthcoming. In that instance the laughter was *with* the court.

A strange plea for exemption was put forward at the Old Bailey last July, a gentleman pathetically beseeching the Common Sergeant to excuse him because he weighed twenty-two-and-a-half stone, and could not possibly get into the jury-box. When complying with the request his lordship sapiently remarked: "It is a weighty reason." And the same might have been said by the judge who allowed a Welsh jurymen to be exempt from service on the ground that he was very anxious to attend a funeral. What the judge said when he learned from the sheriff after granting the request that the applicant was an undertaker can be left to the imagination of the reader.

"Well, I sha'n't sign the sheet," said the Darwen jurymen the other day at an inquest. And turning to the coroner, he added: "Can you find me a day's shooting anywhere?" And then as a rider, and apropos of the official salary: "If I had nine pounds a week I'd have a bit of ferreting, I would."

It is with pleasant interludes such as this that the dull round of a coroner's existence is enlivened; but in the courts of law the jurymen has generally to reserve himself for the verdict—unless he happens to go to sleep, causing an adjournment of the court—to assert his right to be regarded as a humorist.

It is all very well for a mere coroner's jury to return as their verdict, "We find that the child was strangled, but we are not satisfied whether it lived or not:" or, "We are unanimously of opinion that death was due to natural causes accelerated by the accident:" whilst to an Irish jury the returning of a verdict of "Death from heart failure arising from congestion of the lungs, acted upon by the bite"—the case had a dog in it—would come as second nature; but it required twelve stalwart Warwickshire jurymen in attendance at Quarter Sessions to bring in the monumental verdict of "We find the prisoner not guilty, but we should like the Court to reprimand him." Whether the sons of Warwick were influenced by the words of Warwick's most famous son, namely, that "Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge," or whether they bore in mind the Cowperian



line, "Mercy to him that shows it is the rule," and determined to do their duty and at the same time provide for the future, who shall say?

It is related that in a certain undefended case the foreman of the jury returned to the court with his fellows and informed the judge that though they were eleven to one, the prospects of their all coming to an absolute agreement was somewhat remote, the pig-headed twelfth man obstinately refusing to be dictated to. Perhaps he bore in mind those lines by Pope, running—

"The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,  
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine,"

and did not wish their sense to be applied to the panel of which he was so prominent a member.

The judge, somewhat annoyed that anyone could so obstinately refuse to deal out justice, addressing himself to the juror went over the case point by point with elaborate care, finally demanding how on earth he could refuse to find a verdict of guilty in so obvious a case. Then a still small voice piped forth: "That's exactly, my lord, what I have been trying to persuade the other eleven." It is hardly necessary to state that the aforementioned jury was an Irish one.

That the "ould" country is keeping up its reputation is obvious from the case tried in the court of the Dublin Recorder last year. The Recorder, accepting the explanation of the prisoners said: "Gentlemen of the jury, you will acquit the prisoners." The issue-paper was then presented to the foreman of the jury who signed and returned it; whereupon the registrar, as a matter of form, inquired: "Gentlemen, you find the prisoner Not Guilty." "No, sir," replied the foreman promptly: "Guilty." "Surely not," added the Recorder, "I said, gentlemen, 'acquit the prisoners.'" "I thought you said 'convict,'" thoughtfully replied the leader of the twelve impartial ones.

Some time ago a sympathetic jury found a prisoner guilty but recommended him to mercy, saying that if the judge would suspend sentence they would raise enough money to send the malefactor back to his native land; and what is more they kept their word, even seeing the man off by steamer. Last March a Clerkenwell jury, whose eyes were filled with the "tear of sympathy, the milk of human kindness" to such an extent that they were absolutely blinded by the same, emulated on a small scale the generous treatment meted out by their aforementioned brethren by bringing in a verdict of not guilty in a case of pocket-picking, and having done so, presented the accused with the nimble half-sovereign they had collected amongst themselves. It was an awkward moment for that jury when the Chairman of Sessions blandly remarked: "I may now tell you that the accused has been convicted many times."

No wonder that the compilers of Magna Charta insisted on the fact that juries are the bulwarks of the people's liberty—especially some people's.

HAROLD MACFARLANE.

## A STRANGE VISIT.

WHILE I was staying for a few weeks at Longford Park, my brother's house in the country, my sister-in-law related to me the following facts, for which I have never been able to find a natural explanation.

We were sitting over the fire one winter afternoon toasting our toes and looking through a new packet of magazines and papers just arrived from town.

Eva's husband, my brother Wilfrid, had gone out that morning to a meet of the Warwickshire on a new hunter. Both of us, I fancy, felt a little nervous, thinking of the untried horse and possible accidents; though Eva, who was herself an enthusiastic rider to hounds, usually made light of the dangers of the hunting-field.

This afternoon, however, I noticed that her habitual lively spirits had deserted her. She appeared anxious, and started nervously at the slightest sound within the room. Outside, nothing disturbed the profound silence of the country, save the cawing of the rooks in the avenue, and the monotonous splashing of the rain on the laurels which clustered round the French windows.

"Do you know, Edie," she said, after a longer silence than usual, "it was just two years ago to-day that your dear mother died in this house? You were away in India, and Jack"—my younger brother—"was with his regiment at the Curragh.

"We had wired to him to come at once, as the doctors had given up all hope of mother's recovery. While we watched her life ebbing peacefully away, she constantly asked us, 'Have you sent for Jack?'

"'He will soon be here,' we answered, time after time; though, to our great surprise, he did not arrive, or even wire to us when to expect him.

"'No news is good news,' Wilfrid would say to me, as we watched and waited in vain. 'Depend upon it, the boy is on his way to us.'

"We were seated in this room," she continued, "as you and I are now, hoping for Jack's arrival by the five o'clock express. The brougham had gone to the station to meet him; but neither Wilfrid nor I dared to leave the house, for mother was so evidently passing away, that the end might come at any moment. At a quarter past five, I went upstairs to relieve the day nurse, leaving Wilfrid here, smoking a cigar. Ten minutes later I cried out, 'Thank God!' for I heard the roll of carriage wheels coming up the drive, though, strange to say—for we were driving only one horse—I could clearly distinguish the tramp of *two* powerful fast-trotting horses, and the

jingle of pole and chains, as the conveyance pulled up suddenly under the porch.

"Any curiosity I may have experienced as to the manner of Jack's advent was swallowed up by the glad certainty that he had arrived in time to satisfy his mother's longing to see him once again.

"I had taken the nurse's place beside the closely-curtained bed," Eva continued; "but, after the arrival of the carriage, I could not refrain from running to the top of the stairs to listen for the approaching steps of the two brothers. I listened in vain.

"Suddenly, as I leaned over the banisters, I was seized with a panic of wild, unreasoning fear. I ran back to mother's room, and round to the other side of the bed, where the curtains were not drawn. What I saw held me rooted to the place where I stood, unable to speak or move, for mother, who had lain for over twelve hours in a semi-conscious state, was sitting up in the bed, her eyes open, her lips moving as though she were speaking to someone beside her; her hands were going through the motions of holding and stroking gently some other hands, while her face was irradiated by a strange halo of light, which seemed to emanate from her; she looked quite young, yet not in any way changed in the likeness of her old self. She was just the same, yet strangely spiritualised, and clothed with a wonderful beauty.

"I overcame my fear and ran to her. As I did so, the light faded out of her face and eyes, the ashy hue of death overspread her features, and her body lay a dead weight in my arms. I heard a long-drawn sigh escape her, and looking down saw she had left us.

"At the same moment, with loud clank of chains and heavy tread of big horses, the carriage outside rolled away.

"Possessed by an agony of nervous terror, I shrieked aloud, again and again, as I heard it go. My screams quickly brought the two nurses and Wilfrid into the room.

"'Where is Jack?' I cried, on seeing him. 'Oh, where is he?' I sobbed. 'Why did he not come at once—at once? Now it is too late!'

"'Jack has not come, dear,' I heard Wilfrid saying, as it seemed to me, from an immense distance.

"'But the carriage?' I gasped. 'Did you not hear it?'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'there is the mystery. I heard it and went out, but there was no carriage to be seen.'

"I remembered nothing more. When I recovered consciousness, I was lying in my own room in my bed, with Wilfrid kneeling beside me, and a nurse in attendance at the foot of the bed. Dr. Wilcox was standing at the other end of the room, before a window, bending over something which the second nurse held in her arms.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It was the baby, Edie," she continued, after a long pause—"the poor little baby who only lived a few minutes. All that"—indicating

by a gesture the grassy undulating park lands—"would have been his, dear little thing! Now," she went on, with a sigh, "it will all be Jack's some day, for the doctors say I can never have another child."

Unsuspected depths in the gay facile soul of my brother's wife were revealed to me in that moment, when I saw, not the admired beauty of the last London season, but a mother, whose heart hungered for the touch of little clinging fingers, and pressure of small cherub mouth, offering kisses, of which only the angels and very little children know the secret charm.

Then her gay laugh rang out again.

"We are growing dismal, all in the dark," she cried, and rose to ring for lights and tea, while a few minutes later, Wilfred, booted and spurred, and splashed with mud, strode into the room and kissed his adored little wife.

We had both been so deeply engrossed in Eva's story that we had not heard him come in.

\* \* \* \*

After I had gone upstairs that night, Eva came to my room, in her dressing-gown, for a chat, and said :

"I never finished what I was telling you about mother to-day, Edie ; I never refer to that time before Wilfred—because of poor little baby—but I want you to know, dear, because it concerned your own mother and brother, and perhaps you can find some natural explanation of the circumstance. *We cannot*," she added, in a low voice, "nor ever shall in this world."

\* \* \* \*

She told me that while our dear mother lay dying, my younger brother Jack lay also, unable to move through a severe injury sustained while playing polo.

Wilfrid's telegram had lain unopened for hours beside his bedside ; and when the brougham which had gone to the station to meet him returned, the coachman brought a telegram from the colonel of Jack's regiment announcing the accident. The mystery of the carriage and pair which had driven up to the door had never been explained. Wilfrid and the butler had heard it, and both rushed to the porch, but saw nothing ; and they stood staring at one another in astonished silence, unable to believe their eyes and ears. They, too, heard it drive away. The two nurses and several indoor servants heard it also.

\* \* \* \*

When I talked the matter over, later on, with my brother Jack, he reluctantly admitted the inexplicable nature of this strange occurrence ; and also told me, in confidence, that while he lay ill, on the very day, and at the very same hour the mysterious carriage had arrived at Longford Park, he dreamed a very vivid dream, in which he saw my mother in her room, and afterwards recognised the room and the

furniture, which he had never seen before—it had all been refurnished and very much altered—as identical with that of his dream. She held a long conversation with him, and gave him a message for me. It was a warning not to travel by a certain steamer.

Jack made careful inquiries at the shipping agents, and finding no steamer of that name, said nothing to me at the time. I only received the message some two years later, after my conversation with Eva, when I saw Jack and questioned him on the subject.

Six months later, my passage was taken on the *Penelope*, for which vessel the management suddenly substituted a new purchase, renamed the *Valkyrie*. This was the name my mother had mentioned in her warning to me, when she was on the very confines of the other world, two years ago.

I refused the passage, and chose another vessel.

During the voyage to India, the *Valkyrie* was lost off the coast of Spain, with all hands on board. And thus my mother's warning saved my life.

M. ANDERSON.



## LIFE'S YEAR.

BEGUN : the new-born infant lies at rest,  
Regardless of the hopes about it bound,  
Placid and powerless, on its mother's breast,  
Unknowing of the marvels gathered round—  
Of what itself contains—of joys in store—  
Of all the wondrous future yet to live—  
Of the indwelling strength which more and more  
Shall grow in warmer months the year shall give.

March comes : the earth is shrouded still in gloom,  
Broken by fitful rays of struggling light ;  
And tender flow'rets show their dainty bloom—  
The pure white snowdrop and the crocus bright ;  
Fair fragile creatures, basking in the beams  
Of faintest sunshine—messengers of spring ;  
Lovely and spotless as a child's first dreams ;  
Welcome as earliest songs the wood-birds sing.

April of Life ! sweet opening time of youth !  
Leaves burst their sheaths ; thought grows to consciousness ;  
Nature expands and seeks the light of truth—  
Blossoms with promised fruit of blessedness ;  
And glorious visions of great things to be  
Crowd on th' unsullied fancy ; fame's green wreath  
Gleams golden in the far-off radiancy ;  
And friendship laughs at any end save death.

Love knows no age ; defies both law and time ;  
Is life's supremest essence. But the love  
Of man for woman in their early prime  
Buds blushing in May's mild warmth, to prove,

Beneath the glow of June's more sunny skies,  
A blaze of crimson beauty. The soft air  
Is full of fragrant scent and ardent sighs ;  
The heavens have smiled, and all the world is fair.

Now Summer reigns in regal pride and power,  
And sways with mighty sceptre nature's force ;  
Helps towards their full completion, hour by hour,  
The pregnant gift of Spring-time's bounteous source ;  
And man is clothed in his now perfect strength,  
And spends it freely in the work of life ;  
Toils bravely on through each day's sultry length,  
Midst way-side dust and worldly storms and strife.

The apple reddens in the genial heat ;  
Green fields of corn are changed to priceless gold ;  
The hop hangs clusters, where its tendrils meet,  
Of perfumed petals, lying fold on fold.  
Harvests of wealth spread ready to the hand,  
And August claims a grandeur all her own—  
The grace of blessing, in a fruitful land—  
The rich fruition of the seed long sown.

How gently steals September's tranquil breath  
Over the plenteous products of the year !  
How coyly gleams, from out earth's emerald wreath,  
The topaz, conscious of October near !  
Calmed are the fervid passions of the soul ;  
Contentment waits on duties bravely done ;  
The cloudless heavens reveal th' eternal goal ;  
Summer's light grows clearer now her heat is gone.

October has stern work—her plough to guide—  
Her grapes to press to make the red wine flow :  
The father draws his children to his side  
And plants the truth whose flowers have yet to blow :  
A thousand colours glimmer in the wood ;  
Gorgeous the tints that paint the sunset sky :  
The chastened mind reflects all shades of good,  
And clothes itself in regal charity.

Light hearts may shrink from autumn's slow decay,  
And shudder at its dreary rain and wind ;  
And surely life *is* sad when day by day  
We leave some treasure or some hope behind :  
Still has the stately tree, left bare and lone,  
A pride of form its leafage half concealed ;  
And who shall weep o'er faded pleasures gone,  
Looking at what a fairer year will yield ?

And for the garden of that "golden year"—  
The wondrous year of bless'd Eternity—  
Casting away vain dreams that once were dear,  
And musing on a glad futurity,  
Grave Winter guards the seeds cast on his care—  
Those seeds of good which need but heaven's full light  
To burst their fleshly coverings and declare  
Unspoken beauties in their Master's sight ;  
And Winter's frost and snow seem but to sing  
The joys transcendant of the promised Spring.

EMMA RHODES.



